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ABSTRACT

This report contains the proceedings of the International Literacy Day Conference held in Washington, D.C., on September 8, 1978. It contains a program of conference events, an executive summary, a message from the vice president of the United States, and the text of the proceedings. The proceedings include introductory remarks by Edwin Newman: a keynote address by Commissioner of Education Ernest G. Boyer: the presentation of awards to Welthy Honsinger Fisher, founder of Literacy House, India, and to Joan Ganz Cooney, president of the Children's Television Workshop: and remarks made by members of panels on national and international literacy. Some of the ten participants on the panels were Reverend Jesse Jackson, president of Operation PUSH: Mrs. Robert McNamara, chair of Reading is Fundamental: Dorothy Strickland, president of the International Reading Association: and Aklilu Habte, director of the education department, The World Bank. (MKM)

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PROCEEDINGS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY CONFERENCE

WASHINGTON, D.C. • SEPTEMBER 8, 1978

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In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstances, and of no matter what parents, the potentiality of the human race is born again: and in him, too, once more, and of each of us, our terrific responsibility towards human life; towards the utmost idea of goodness, of the horror of error, and of God.

Every breath his senses shall draw, every act and every shadow and thing in all creation, is a mortal poison, or is a drug, or is a signal or symptom, or is a teacher, or is a liberator, or is liberty itself, depending entirely upon his understanding: and understanding, and action proceeding from understanding and guided by it, is the one weapon against the world's bombardment, the one medicine, the one instrument by which liberty, health, and joy may be shaped or shaped toward, in the individual, and in the race.

James Agee, *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*

International Literacy Day, 1978

By the President of the United States of America

A Proclamation

Throughout our history, the United States has stood for the protection and promotion of human rights for all peoples. Central to these concerns are the political, social, and economic rights of all human beings. Our dedication to these rights stems from the belief that all people should be allowed to live their lives to the fullest of their capabilities, that the talent and character given each person by God should not be wasted.

Education is one of the most important gifts our society can give to its people in helping them fulfill their human potential. Especially in our modern world, adequate communication skills are essential. Education and training to promote literacy are central to our efforts to improve the lives of all people, and guarantee their basic human rights. Every illiterate adult is an indictment of us all.

In our own nation, and in nations across the world, significant efforts have been made to advance literacy, and bring its benefits to every man and woman. Our concern and dedication to this cause have brought results, but there still remains great progress to be made. Around the world, eight hundred million people lack effective reading or writing skills.

For the past 12 years, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization has set aside September 8 as Literacy Day. The United States has always joined with other nations in recognizing the need to advance literacy among people everywhere, to promote our cherished human rights.

NOW, THEREFORE, I, JIMMY CARTER, President of the United States of America, do hereby proclaim September 8, 1978, as International Literacy Day, and I call upon the people of the United States to assess and strengthen our commitment to eliminating illiteracy both at home and abroad, recognizing that in so doing we are helping people everywhere open a gateway to many other human rights as well.

IN WITNESS WHEREOF, I have hereunto set my hand this twenty-first day of August, in the year of our Lord nineteen hundred seventy-eight, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and third.

Jimmy Carter

NATIONAL ENDOWMENT FOR THE HUMANITIES

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20506

THE CHAIRMAN

The Honorable Jimmy E. Carter
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities and on behalf of the individuals and agencies contributing to the International Literacy Day Conference, I respectfully submit to you the proceedings of this Conference. Following your proclamation of September 8, 1978 as International Literacy Day, we have published the findings of the Conference as a first step in giving clarity and a sense of purpose to efforts to eradicate illiteracy, both in this country and throughout the world.

By publishing these findings, we hope to stimulate educational institutions and agencies at all levels to evaluate their programs in basic skills education, and improve their capacities to teach the fundamentals of human learning to all people. Those of us who participated in the conference are hopeful that these proceedings will aid you in evaluating our national progress toward the goal of universal literacy.

Respectfully yours,

Joseph Duffey
Chairman

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The International Literacy Day Conference marked the official United States observance of International Literacy Day, September 8, 1978. The Conference was initiated by the Office of Dr. Peter G. Bourne, Special Assistant to the President for Health Issues, under the planning direction of Mr. Gerald Fill, Deputy Assistant for Health Issues. Mr. Stuart Diamond, a Coordinator for the Conference, edited the Conference Proceedings at the National Endowment for the Humanities.

These proceedings are a record of the ideas, issues, and concerns voiced by the participants in the Conference; they were prepared from texts submitted for publication by each invited speaker, and from recorded transcripts of the day's activities. The views expressed herein are not intended to reflect positions or policies of the agencies or organizations represented by individual speakers, nor do they reflect the policies of the National Endowment for the Humanities. Rather, the Proceedings of the International Literacy Day Conference represent an attempt to give permanent form to the explorations and discussions occasioned by this first national conference on domestic and worldwide literacy.

Achieving universal literacy is an integral part of the United States' commitment to promoting human rights. To be illiterate in the modern world is to be trapped in a cycle of ignorance, poverty, and isolation from one's fellow human beings. Moreover, active participation in the economic, social, cultural and political life of the community and the nation requires a basic capacity to read and write.

The proportion of the population having literacy skills has risen steadily over the past century, both in the United States and throughout the world. During the last thirty years alone, worldwide illiteracy has been reduced from forty-four to twenty-nine percent of the population. However, rapid population growth has meant that more people—over 800 million—are illiterate today than was the case thirty years ago. Problems of illiteracy are particularly pronounced in third world and developing nations. In the twenty-five least developed countries, where the per-capita income is less than one hundred dollars per year, illiteracy rates average over 80 percent. Illiteracy helps to create a vicious circle of underdevelopment. It severely hampers economic growth, perpetuating a national poverty level which makes it nearly impossible to undertake major educational initiatives.

Illiteracy in the United States is of equally serious concern, although the problem has important differences in dimension. In a highly advanced technological society, citizens must master increasingly complex language usage to be functionally literate—capable of holding a job, filling out a form, or voicing an opinion effectively. Although, by UNESCO standards, illiteracy in this country has virtually disappeared, twenty-three million Americans currently lack even the minimal skills and knowledge essential for day-to-day living, and an additional thirty-nine million suffer from inadequate literacy skills. More than one out of four Americans cannot fully participate in our society due to their lack of competence in reading and writing.

This Conference, coordinated by the White House Office of Health Issues, and sponsored jointly by the Department of State, the Agency for International Development, the Department of Health, Education and Welfare, and private sector organizations, reflects a growing national concern for the problem of illiteracy. It also marks our observance of the thirteenth UNESCO-sponsored International Literacy Day by an effort to increase public support for achieving universal literacy.

The goals of the conference are broadly outlined in President Carter's inaugural address: to "Fight our wars against poverty, ignorance, and injustice," and in the Helsinki Agreements of 1975: "To promote the exchange of experience, on a bilateral or multilateral basis, in teaching methods at all levels of education." To fulfill these goals, the conference brought together leaders from government, education, the media, and private industry to discuss strategies for promoting worldwide literacy, and to review present governmental and private

efforts in this area. The conference also stressed the need to create effective literacy programs for the illiterate poor in this country and abroad.

Perhaps most importantly, the conference demonstrated that solutions for illiteracy are not merely a question of aid and instruction from more-developed to under-developed countries. The United States has much to learn from other nations' efforts to increase literacy, as well as much to contribute toward them. By convening this conference, and publishing its findings, we hope to demonstrate our readiness to join in a cooperative international effort to eradicate illiteracy.

10:00 Welcome and Introductory remarks

Mr. Tom Reston
Deputy Assistant Secretary
of State for Public Affairs

Mr. Edwin Newman,
Master of Ceremonies

10:15 Keynote Address

Dr. Ernest G. Boyer
Commissioner of Education

11:00 Presentation of Awards in behalf of the Vice President of the United States

International Award—
Ms. Welthy Fisher
Founder of Literacy House—
India
Presenter
Mr. C. William Maynes
Assistant Secretary of State
Bureau of International
Organization Affairs

National Award—
Ms. Joan Ganz Cooney
President, Children's TV
Workshop—Sesame Street
Presenter
Ms. Patricia Graham
Director, National Institute
of Education

11:45 Lunch

1:00 National Panel

Mr. Alexander Burke
President, McGraw-Hill Book
Company

Reverend Jesse Jackson
President, Operation PUSH

Mrs. Robert McNamara
Chairman, Reading Is
Fundamental

Dr. Craig Phillips
State Superintendent of Public
Instruction, North Carolina

Moderator
Dr. Mary F. Berry
Assistant Secretary for
Education

2:30 Break

2:45 International Panel

Dr. James Grant
President, Overseas Development Council

Mr. Aklilu Habte
Director, Education Department
The World Bank

Dr. Seth Spaulding
Department of International Education
University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Dorothy Strickland
President, International Reading Association

Moderator

David Bronheim
Assistant Administrator
Intergovernmental and International Affairs, Agency for International Development

4:15 Closing Remarks

Dr. Joseph Duffey
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

Reception immediately following in the Benjamin Franklin Room

The proceedings of the International Literacy Day Conference reflect the often-diverging views of its seventeen major speakers. Conferees were united, however, in asserting that illiteracy cannot be treated as an isolated phenomenon, apart from the economic, social and political conditions of those who suffer from it. They pointed to the strong correlation between family income and literacy levels in the United States, and stressed the need to view international literacy programs as part of an integrated basic-needs approach to development, in conjunction with programs in such areas as nutrition, family planning, health, agricultural development, and employment.

Those who participated in the conference also agreed that literacy should be viewed as part of "a total language learning process." Many of the speakers emphasized the need to maintain continuity between oral communication and literacy skills. Others discussed positive and negative influences of mass media on patterns of oracy and literacy in contemporary society, and one participant called for a commission to assess "the growing crisis of the print culture." The closing remarks further emphasized the importance of literacy as a basis for cultural and political citizenship, noting the connection between the goal of universal literacy and fundamental democratic values of equal social and economic opportunity, political self-determination, and freedom of thought.

Specific policy issues were also addressed at the conference, and individual speakers made numerous recommendations in regard to them. In the area of federal legislation, a number of the conferees pressed for the enactment of the administration-backed Basic Skills and Educational Quality Act.[1] They also urged that additional federal funding be provided for adult basic education programs. Other proposals included support for community-based initiatives to bring literacy skills to the disadvantaged, hard-core poor, and establishing long-term educational priorities at the federal level to ensure continuous support for programs proven effective in the teaching of basic skills.

The participants on the National Panel emphasized policies and initiatives for the early years of formal education. They recommended that highest priority be given to teaching the fundamentals of reading and writing during the first three years of public schooling. To accomplish this aim, conferees voiced the need for more extensive staff training for public school teachers, greater use of television and structured volunteer programs for teaching basic skills, and increased support for the distribution of "top quality, inexpensive books." Another recurring theme in the discussions was the need for strong ties between the schools and their communities. The participants stressed that teachers and administrators must carry moral authority within the community, and equally, that parents must lend the psychological support essential to maintaining order and self-discipline within a classroom, if disadvantaged children are to be motivated to learn basic literacy skills.

[1]Subsequent to the Conference, Congress passed a portion of this legislation as Title II of Public Law 95-561, "Basic Skills Improvement," 1978 Education Amendments.

Discussions of the United States' role in international literacy efforts centered on methods of integrating literacy training into all areas of international development assistance. Long-range timetables for the eradication of illiteracy received some attention, and one participant expressed support for the Club of Rome's target of 75 percent literacy in all countries by the year 2000. Achieving this target figure, set forth in the report, *Reshaping the International Order*, would require a major acceleration in third-world efforts; plans such as India's new Revised Minimum Needs Program were cited as having the necessary scope to accomplish the task. United States financial support for the Revised Minimum Needs Program was strongly urged.

The deliberations of the International Panel, however, tended to focus on efforts needed within underdeveloped nations to launch and maintain successful basic education programs. Third-world countries were urged to pool national resources—creating programs which transcend departmental jurisdictions—to make the struggle for literacy an integral part of their development process. Creating instructional materials, as well as publishing and press capacities, in indigenous languages at the local level was strongly advocated, as well as building local capacities for evaluating basic skills instruction.

The conferees also exchanged views on the difficulties associated with assistance from international organizations. Voluntary organizations involved in grass-roots level instruction were pointed to as highly useful sources of information and support—ones that developing nations could call upon with greater frequency. Groups such as the International Reading Association were proposed as potential clearing-houses for information and research on successful education programs from nations with a broad spectrum of needs and life-patterns. Finally, the technical and substantive work of the United Nations and its member agencies was cited as having been insufficiently utilized, both in the U.S. and among developing nations. Suggestions followed for increasing opportunities for providers of literacy services and planners of third-world literacy programs to exchange information and ideas.

OFFICE OF THE VICE PRESIDENT

WASHINGTON

MESSAGE TO INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY CONFERENCE

President Carter and I are delighted to welcome you to the International Literacy Day Conference.

Your meeting today is a powerful symbol of our commitment to the fundamental human right to literacy. The ability to read and write is the groundwork on which all our hopes for world progress are built.

Without literacy, there are meager prospects for eradicating hunger and disease. Without literacy, our on-slaught on poverty is destined to failure. Without literacy, despair and decay will invariably stalk our efforts to improve the quality of life for people everywhere.

But this conference reaffirms the goal of world literacy. We believe in literacy as an indispensable tool in itself, as a fundamental human right, and as a gateway to other human rights as well.

We also believe our dollars in education are endlessly repaid. Illiteracy breeds unemployment. Dropouts fall prey to dependency and despair. To help fight this, we've asked Congress to adopt the biggest budget increases in elementary and secondary education in the history of this nation. And most of the money will go to the educationally disadvantaged through Title I and through Head Start where we're emphasizing the need for basic skills.

Your agenda is ambitious, and as a group you represent both an impressive array of talent, and a moving testimony of continued dedication to a crucial goal. We are deeply grateful for your devotion to the hopes and futures of all Americans. And today we have a special opportunity to consider our own commitment to literacy in the context of an interdependent global community. I wish you the greatest success on this important day.

Walter F. Mondale

Walter F. Mondale

Welcome and Introductory remarks

Mr. Tom Reston,
Deputy Assistant Secretary
of State for Public Affairs

Mr. Edwin Newman,
Master of Ceremonies

MR. RESTON

Good morning. I am Tom Reston, Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Public Affairs, and I want to welcome all of you here today on behalf of Secretary Vance and the Department of State. I find it hopeful that so many concerned people are gathered together to address the problem of illiteracy, and I am more hopeful still that you will address it with courage and determination. It is particularly important that our discussions today will involve not only various agencies of the United States and other governments, but also concerned members of the private sector.

I have a pleasant task this morning, and that is to introduce Ed Newman, our Master of Ceremonies for the day. Mr. Newman is a great figure in American journalism. He has been covering the news for over a quarter of a century. He has been the bureau chief for his agency in London, in Rome and in Paris, and has covered five sets of national political conventions in this country. His special achievements include numerous public service programs for the National Broadcasting Company; he also received the Peabody Award in 1967 for his commentaries for NBC radio. He has received honors for distinguished service from the University of Missouri, one of the great journalism schools in this country, and is widely known for his two best-selling books, *Strictly Speaking—Will America be the Death of English?*, and *A Civil Tongue*. Without further ado—Ed Newman.

EDWIN NEWMAN

Thank you, Tom Reston.

Speaking for myself, I have to say that I rather regard coming to Washington in connection with language and literacy as a foray, if not into enemy country, at any rate into alien country. Language does not enjoy its finest flowering here in Washington. But perhaps that makes it appropriate for us to be here, because it seems to me that we have no hope of dealing with our problems, except by chance, unless we understand them, and one another. And I do not see how we can do that unless we can dig ourselves out from under the jargon, the mush, the smog, the dull pompous boneless gassey language under which we Americans have been burying ourselves and beneath which we have very nearly disappeared here in Washington. That may not seem as dramatic a challenge as some others that face the country; it may not be thought to be something by which a nation lives or dies; but I think that in the long run it is as pressing as any.

It may be in the short run as well. It has unfortunately become typical of American English that enough is never enough. Was an expense account padded? The *New York Times* tells us it was falsely padded. Has Alaskan oil given us a reprieve? President Carter tells us it has given us a temporary reprieve. The Federal Bar Association here in Washington—and with the exception of sociologists, language has no worse enemy than lawyers—urged its members to join a group tour of Europe, and pointed out that one of the attractions of the tour was nonregimented freedom to do as you wish. That sounds as though it might degenerate into license.

Last June a number of physicians—who don't do much for English, either—gathered at the University of California School of Medicine at San Francisco to discuss the psychological issues surrounding terminality. Not death—terminality. Oh terminality, where is thy sting? The Elmo Roper Polling Organization did a report last year on medical care insurance—that should be of some interest in this city—and it asked people among other things whether they intended to have children. The younger the people asked, the fewer the children they said they would have. The Roper Organization commented in a sentence of astonishing silliness. "Thus, a large part of the generation under thirty has adopted child-

lessness as a viable option." Childlessness will not lead to much viability.

For many social scientists, I am sorry to have to say, almost any nonsense will serve. I was sent, not long ago, a paragraph of a job application in the field of social work. The applicant said of herself, "I have substantial and intensive experience in these major fields—criminal justice, human service delivery systems, and volunteerism. My work experience is unique in that it encompasses both the direction of complex pragmatic efforts and the applications of consultative and evaluative skills and techniques. In addition, the major aspect of my work experience has been focused on the design and implementation of linkages and pragmatic interfaces among service delivery systems to provide a system to target populations ordinarily not reached or serviced." You ask yourself, "What work does she propose to do?" Is the designing and implementation of pragmatic interfaces something we should want to happen? I do not know. And of course this kind of writing spreads. The book reviewer in the *Washington Post* did not want to use so untechnical a term as mother. He spoke of the maternal parent. I was thinking recently of the Boy Scouts' Motto—Be Prepared. Two words, three syllables, and it says everything that has to be said. If the scouts were getting a motto today, it would speak of contingency plans, spectrum of calculated response reactions—it would certainly not be, "Be Prepared."

We have reached the point in the United States where it is not enough for children to get an education, or even a good education. They must have, according to the latest fashion, a quality educational experience. Well, there are many examples of this kind and I shouldn't go on very much longer. But I cannot forbear to mention the Head of the Federal Drug Administration, who said of a report going around Washington, "This information cannot be characterized in the fashion I would represent as conclusionary." I would like to think that nothing exists that could be represented as conclusionary. Now you will notice that this kind of language can be found almost anywhere in the country. A reader in Georgia sent me a card that she received from her optometrist, and it read, "It is time for your progress case study to see how your visual system is operating in its new environment." Come in and have your glasses checked.

Well, what ought to be done about all of this? What ought to be done about the problem we are dealing with today, which is largely a matter of people who are deprived of the opportunity of becoming literate? For reasons beyond their control they are illiterate. My concern is principally with people who have every opportunity to be literate but abuse that opportunity. How can you make people believe that language matters?

I spoke recently to two thousand high school students near Philadelphia, and I tried to tell them why language was important, and I will paraphrase briefly here what I said then. I told them that they might be unconvinced by my arguments in favor of precision and correctness of language. That they might tell themselves that language does not matter, and that they could see this from the fact that so few people do use it well. They might think that those who think language is important are snobs who simply want them to sound as they do. I told the pupils that I understood that point of view. If the level of speaking and writing in this country falls, the disadvantage that goes with using the language poorly must fall with it. But, equally, the advantage of using the language well increases—precisely because that advantage is less widely shared.

And there are other points. Using the language imaginatively, amusingly, sardonically, poetically, economically, arrestingly, can be fun and can be satisfying. It can be one of the factors that shape your attitude toward the rest of the world. It gives you, or helps to give you, a position from which to look at life. It does something else. Speaking and writing clearly require that you think clearly, require that you frame your thoughts in concrete and specific ways. That helps you to see what is happening when other people do not. And that is a means of self-protection, a means of self-defense. Ladies and gentlemen, if you have that self-defense and self-protection you will be fooled less often, and that is

worth a great deal. I thank you for listening to me. I know you have come here far more to listen to the keynote speaker this morning, to whom I intend to give the briefest introduction possible. He is the United States Commissioner of Education and it seems to me that should be a sufficient recommendation for his speaking here today—Ladies and gentlemen, Ernest L. Boyer.

DR. BOYER

Keynote Address
Dr. Ernest G. Boyer
Commissioner of Education

I was enormously relieved when that introduction was completed. With every illustration I expected to hear read back to me a memo from the United States Office of Education.

I thought of Ed Newman several months ago when an associate of mine brought in a report I was to sign. I glanced through it and discovered that it was garbled and shot full of educationese. Clarity and simplicity was not the style, and I insisted that it be rewritten clearly and succinctly. At this point my associate, wanting to please, responded by saying, "Oh you mean you would like me to laymanize the report." And I said, "Precisely." Ed, it just occurred to me that the title of your next book might be "Let's Laymanize the Language."

This conference celebrates the thirteenth UNESCO International Literacy Day. It is based on the central premise that literacy—acquiring written language skills—is a basic human right. It acknowledges that the capacity to send and receive messages sets humanity apart from all other forms of life, and that through language we are bound together in the profound interdependence we call society.

All we know, all we fear, and all we hope is created and conveyed through symbols, and a man or woman who does not master the written word is isolated from the past, ignorant of the future, trapped in a tiny world of narrow possibilities, and tragically cut off from the benefits of life.

President Carter, in his International Literacy Day proclamation, declared that "Education is one of the most important gifts our society can give to its people. . . ." Especially in our modern world—adequate communication skills are essential to improve the lives of all people, and guarantee their basic human rights. The President went on to say that every illiterate adult is an indictment of us all.

Word symbols are indeed essential; they are the building blocks of complex thought. And language not only gives us dignity and freedom—it gives us the capacity to create as well.

The noted Brazilian educator and philosopher, Paolo Freire, observed that, "Learning to speak and write ought to be an opportunity for men to know what speaking any word really means: a human act implying reflection and action. As such it is a primordial human right and not the privilege of a few." This is the central thesis of this conference.

In recent years our global push for literacy has made dramatic gains. From 1950 to 1960 illiteracy—worldwide—dropped from 44.3 to 39.3 percent. From 1960 to 1970 it dropped again, to 34.2 percent. And it has been estimated that today "only" 20 percent of the world's population cannot read or write.

But these statistics conceal much more than they reveal. In recent years, millions of people have indeed been taught to read and write, and yet these gains have not kept pace with population growth.

Between 1960 and 1970, the illiteracy rate in Africa, Asia, and the Arab states dropped approximately 8 percent. During this same period, however, the total *number* of people in these regions who could neither read nor write continued to *increase*. In the Arab states, the number of illiterates increased from 42 to 49 million. In Asia, the number of illiterates grew from 542 to 579 million people, which is 46 percent of the total population. And—in 1970—73 percent of the people on the continent of Africa could not read or write. Throughout the entire world today, nearly 800 million are illiterate, which is an increase of 100 million people since 1950.

Kurt Waldheim recently observed that "It is an unhappy fact that in a world in which scientific and technological progress is unequalled in history, one adult in three cannot read or write."

By UNESCO standards illiteracy in this country has all but disappeared. The number of Americans unable to read or write dropped from 11.3 percent in 1900 to 4.8 percent in 1930 to 1.2 percent today.

But America's dramatic march toward universal literacy also has a darker side. While almost everyone has learned in very simple terms to read and write, the *requirements* of language usage in this Nation have—in recent years—grown increasingly complex, and we have not kept pace.

When America was founded, the shaping and sending of messages was a slow and labored process. It took several weeks for news of the American uprising to reach King George's ears. And the fastest Pony Express trip ever made between St. Joseph, Missouri, and Sacramento, California, took 7 days and 17 hours. That record was set in 1860.

But all of that was yesterday. Today we are bombarded—from birth to death—by sights and sounds far more persistent and intense than anything our ancestors could have dreamed. Ninety-nine and nine-tenths percent of American homes have at least one radio. Computers now send messages—calculating at the rate of 4 to 5 million "actions" every second. An earth-controlled Voyager rocket is on its way to Saturn, more than 750 million miles away. If all goes well, it will sail on to Uranus, which is 1.8 *billion* miles away.

Today we have in America about 125 million television sets—that's an average of nearly two sets from every household. And TV is viewed, or at least it's turned *on*, 6½ hours every day. And speaking of comparisons—I understand that all of the printed script of a 30 minute telecast of the evening news would fill one-third of a page of the *New York Times*.

While TV has grown, printed publications also have multiplied dramatically in recent years. In 1948, the year Harry Truman defeated Dewey, the *New York Times* index ran 1,211 pages. By 1970, the total had soared to 2,291 pages. In 1960, 15,000 book titles were published; a decade later, the number had more than doubled, to over 36,000. More than 2,000 large, closely printed pages are now required merely to list by author, title, and subject the paperback books currently in print. And the Library of Congress is acquiring some new material every second of every working day. In one day, more information is transmitted than the total knowledge available to mankind in the Renaissance.

Clearly this is an age of great potential for human progress. But this also has become an age of tremendous peril. There is growing evidence that, with so much stimulation, the quality of language in this Nation has diminished. There is growing evidence that our communications have become increasingly imprecise, and there is growing evidence that language skills—for many of our fellow citizens—have not kept pace with the increased demands of our complicated culture.

Today millions of men, women, and children sit in darkened rooms for hours watching fleeting images—listening, not speaking to each other, twisting knobs, not writing letters. Millions of people passively soak up the messages of others rather than create and send messages of their own. And as Ed Newman said recently, we no longer have the luxury of *silence*—to figure out what we want to say, or to reflect on what others say to us. Millions of Americans never seem to *write* these days except perhaps to scrawl their signature at the bottom of a charge card or a credit slip.

The Educational Testing Service reported in 1972 that while approximately one-third of American adults read books about 45 minutes on a given day—mostly the Bible—approximately one-half of all adult Americans never read a book.

The paradox is this: While illiteracy in this Nation has continued to decline, the "language sophistication" now required continues to increase. The point is not to romanticize the past but to acknowledge that our world has gotten increasingly complex.

Professor Ted R. Kilty, in a fascinating study, analyzed materials an ordinary person has to read. He found that a 6th grade reading level is required to understand a driver's license manual. An 8th grade level is needed to follow the directions on a frozen TV dinner. Aspirin bottle instructions are written at a 10th grade reading level. To understand an insurance policy requires a 12th grade ability, and, to no one's surprise, college ability is required to figure out the meaning of an apartment lease. Now and then you need a lawyer to untangle the garbled syntax. And I suspect that is precisely the way the game is expected to be played.

The point is this: In frontier villages, 200 years ago, those who could write their name and read several books and simple messages were looked upon as educated persons. And when John Harvard—who founded Harvard College—had a library of about 80 books, he was considered a very educated person. Today—with new technology, new products, and the explosion of printed publications—a person who has these limited language skills is considered ignorant. Such people often are frustrated and confused by the complexity of day-to-day transactions.

It has been estimated that more than 20 million adult Americans are functionally illiterate—they just do not have the language skills they need to get along. The central inescapable facts persist. Illiteracy in both the so-called developing and the developed regions of the world is a human curse which cannot be ignored. A renewed national and international commitment to worldwide literacy is required.

In America excellence in language must be the Nation's goal. Every child must be taught reading and writing fundamentals during the first three years of formal education. And in the upper grades all children must develop vocabulary and language comprehension.

This commitment to teach all children to read and write effectively is, I am convinced, a realistic goal. After all—before they ever come to school—all children have already mastered the fundamentals of communication.

During the first 3 years of life each child—except the most severely handicapped—begins to understand the miraculous process we call language. Each child converts thoughts and feelings into symbols we call *words*. Each child automatically interprets sound distinctions we call *phonemes*. And, each child—with little or no coaching—shapes the tongue and teeth and oral cavity to reproduce such complicated sounds as "R" and "L" and "N" and "K."

To move from the spoken to the *written* word is simply an extension of a profoundly complicated process already acquired by young children, and we should assume success, not failure, for each student. To put the issue as pointedly as I can—I'm convinced children will learn to read and write in school if these skills are given top priority.

President Carter—in the Basic Skills and Educational Quality Act he has sent to Congress—has underscored the fact that teaching every child to read and write is a top priority of this Administration. In the proposed legislation every State is encouraged to develop a statewide literacy plan—both for young children and adults. The new legislation also calls for a closer partnership with parents. Schools cannot teach children all alone and parents must participate more actively in the education of their children. The use of television to teach language fundamentals is also proposed. Children watch television from 4,000 to 5,000 hours before they ever go to school. And, before they graduate, students spend more time in front of television than in front of teachers. In recent years television has become more powerful than the classroom teacher. I'm convinced that the gap between television and the classroom can and must be closed.

Recently, the Library of Congress and the Office of Education co-sponsored a conference on Television, the Classroom and the Book. The goal of this conference was to emphasize that television must reinforce, not undercut, the goals of formal education. After all, Sesame Street alone has introduced millions of children to words and phonemes and to the number system before they ever go to school, and I'm de-

lighted that on this International Literacy Day Joan Ganz Cooney will be recognized for her brilliant work—not as a technician, but as one of this Nation's greatest teachers. The distribution of top quality, inexpensive books also is proposed in the President's new legislation. If our children are to read, the bookshelves in our homes must be filled with more than knickknacks and plastic flowers. If we are to achieve literacy, children must have books to read.

This year the United States Office of Education—through the Reading Is Fundamental program—will distribute 11 million books to 3.85 million children. That's a 16 percent increase in books distributed in just one year. Good reading and good books are inextricably interlocked, and this push to get literature to young readers must continue to expand.

Teachers, too, are of course absolutely crucial, and we have increased the support for Teacher Centers which will permit classroom teachers to work together to improve their teaching skills.

In addition, other key Federal education programs—such as Head Start, Follow Through, and Title I—have greatly increased their commitment to the basic skills. And currently 80 percent of all Federal support to elementary and secondary schools is focused on teaching children to read and write.

Finally, to achieve language excellence, schools must be supported by business and industry, private agencies, and ordinary citizens. Several months ago I visited Martin Luther King School in Schenectady, New York. Walking down the corridor, I saw an older man and a young boy sitting in the library with a book. I discovered that the man—a retiree from G.E—had volunteered to come to school each day to tutor boys and girls. More than that, he had convinced 35 other retirees to volunteer to help children with their reading. The older man explained to me that it made no sense for him to sit at home and criticize the schools while he had intelligence, knew how to read, and cared deeply about children and our Nation's future. The schools must have citizen support.

One further point: A national literacy program must focus not just on young children but also on adults. Today, through the Adult Education Act, we reach some two million older people every year. These adult students are taught reading and writing fundamentals as well as math. To expand this program the Administration has increased the adult education budget from $80.5 million in 1977 to $90.7 million. In addition, the Office of Education has signed interagency agreements with CETA, HUD, ACTION, and the U.S. Navy to provide reading and writing instruction to adults. The ACTION program alone is using more than 33,000 older Americans as tutors all across the country to teach other adults to read. Project READ, sponsored by the Department of Justice, uses both traditional and alternative schools to increase significantly the reading capacity of teenagers in trouble with the law. Finally, the National Institute of Education—NIE—is conducting national research and experimentation in literacy. Under Pat Graham's able leadership this important agency is giving vigorous attention to teaching reading and writing in the schools.

I am confident that if we give literacy top priority in this Nation, children can be taught to read and write, and that adults can have the language sophistication they need to cope in our complicated world.

It is very clear that we also *must participate aggressively in the worldwide literacy crusade*. UNESCO's push against illiteracy was proclaimed as far back as its first General Conference in 1946, and since that date numerous resolutions have acknowledged UNESCO's commitment to world literacy. But there have been more than formal resolutions. The World Conference of Education Ministers held at Teheran in 1965 marked a historic turning point. It was there—in Teheran—that the Experimental World Literacy Program was launched—a program which intensively pushed literacy projects in 11 countries. UNESCO also has established two Regional Centers for Functional Literacy, in Mexico and Egypt. And, while UNESCO's programs have not kept pace with population growth, the effort is absolutely crucial and must be sustained.

The Agency for International Development—AID—also is involved in literacy. The Agency spends approximately $100 million annually on education—about half of it on nonforma , out-of-school instruction and primary education. AID also has recognized that literacy must be tied to the daily needs of people, and in the Ethiopian Family Life Project, for example, the agency relates literacy classes for women to improved nutrition, family planning, health, and family income.

Literacy is of concern to the World Bank as well; last year the Bank loaned almost $300 million for educational research and action.

This total effort, however, represents only a fraction of what must be done. I find it disheartening to note that when the UNESCO literacy panel—which awards prizes annually for meritorious work in literacy—met last year it voted to defer the award, concluding there were no outstanding projects to be honored.

On a more hopeful note, Lauback Literacy International has demonstrated what can be done with low budgets, enthusiasm, and hard work. The "each one teach one" technique has used tens of thousands of volunteers to teach millions of illiterates to read, using materials prepared in over 300 separate languages.

But still more imagination is required. In our electronic age—with satellites hovering over every continent and with inexpensive publications exploding everywhere—there must be ways to bring low-cost education to those who cannot read or write.

Above all, we need renewed commitment—a commitment which recognizes just how completely the quality of our language is linked to the quality of our life on earth. There are times when I pause and try to view the Earth from a greater distance—as if from outer space. I see the Earth—green, and blue, and cloud-covered—unique in this body of planets, unique because of the thin film of human life which extends itself across the surface of our planet.

And sometimes it seems to me that this thin film of human life is, in fact, one vast living organism, of which each of us is one small cell, an organism tied together by the connective tissue of communication, by an intricate network of radio signals, satellites, computers, and, of course, the written and spoken word.

There are, right now, ideas—whole systems of creative thought—so vast that no one man or no one woman can ever hope to fully comprehend them, and yet they *do* exist and collectively they fit together. Just as no *single brain cell* can comprehend the thoughts of the human mind—so it is that no *single human being* can comprehend everything that was involved in the complicated human transaction of sending man to outer space—and yet the action was accomplished.

An how is such human progress possible? It is possible only through communication, as we send messages to each other.

But in all this where is the person who cannot read or write? He or she is isolated from the past, ignorant of the future, trapped in a tiny world of narrow possibilities, and tragically cut off from the benefits of life.

Worldwide literacy, of the highest quality, is an essential human goal.

Presentation Of The International Award To Dr. Welthy Honsinger Fisher, Founder Of Literacy House, India

Presenter
Mr. C. William Maynes
Assistant Secretary of State,
Bureau of International
Organization Affairs

SECRETARY MAYNES

On behalf of the Department of State and the Administration, I'm honored to welcome here today Dr. Welthy Honsinger Fisher. I think nothing could be more appropriate, on this International Literacy Day, than to pay tribute to a pioneer in this important field of human development and human rights. She has devoted a lifetime of service to education and contributed so much to our understanding of the problems of illiteracy and poverty.

Dr. Fisher's accomplishments are formidable. She has filled many different roles in the 99 years of her life: teacher, administrator, world traveller, lecturer, author, fundraiser, president and now honorary chairman of World Education in New York, wife of Frederick Fisher, Methodist Bishop of Calcutta and Burma.

She is perhaps best known as the founder of Literacy House in Lucknow, India. It was in India, inspired by Mahatma Gandhi, who personally urged her to help the villages, that Dr. Fisher created new ways to teach illiterate adults not only how to read, but how to better their lives. By relating literacy to other needs such as more food and better nutrition, and smaller and healthier families, Dr. Fisher trained teachers, administrators, writers and puppeteers in the context of functional literacy before the term was coined.

I'm pleased to note that the U.S. Government, through AID, helped support the development of Literacy House for ten years. Dr. Fisher, however, deserves full credit for each phase of its program, which came to include a family life center and a young farmer's institute as well. She also established an all-Indian board (which presently owns and governs Literacy House) and enlisted support within India, Europe, Canada and the United States.

Dr. Fisher has already been honored with four honorary degrees and many awards in recognition of her work and great contributions. We at the Department of State recently had the pleasure of submitting her name to the Director General of UNESCO as the United States nominee for Literacy Awards that are made this day under its auspices.

We have just received word from our ambassador to UNESCO that you have been selected by the International Jury for Honorable Mention, and that he has been asked to receive this award on your behalf in the ceremony which is taking place in Paris.

Your contribution as an energetic and sensitive teacher and educator, your vision and concern as a great humanitarian, and your years of dedicated service have transformed the lives of literally hundreds of thousands of people, and will continue to do so for decades to come. Dr. Fisher, it is therefore a great pleasure for me to present to you this award: "Welthy Honsinger Fisher, U.S. Nominee for UNESCO award, in recognition of your outstanding contribution to world literacy—Walter Mondale, Vice President, United States, International Literacy Day."

DR. FISHER

Thank you, Mr. Maynes, for honoring me
today.

Other honors have come my way
through the years—in India, in the
Philippines.

But I do treasure this first honor
by my own government . . .
Because it means that we are recognizing
that illiteracy is not just a problem
in developing countries,
but here at home as well.

We all believe in the importance of literacy—
BUT—literacy as a means . . .
for bettering lives for all people . . .
Literacy linked to the daily needs of people.

I have often felt that the world is divided
between those who care for the others
and those who do not.

Illiteracy stems from CARE-LESSNESS.
We know now that it can afflict us also.

Let us continue to CARE—
so that everyone has that great chance to
grow.

And let those of us who have been helping
to develop undernourished lives abroad,
learn from them,
in our efforts here in America.

The world is full of new realities
for us to keep on learning.

It is true, as Mr. Maynes has said,
that I will be 99 next week.
Should I sit down?—I can't.
You see, I am getting ready to join forces
with that growing minority group
of 13 thousand Centenarians in this country!

Let us all—young and old, black and white—
whatever our faith—
hold to our strength and love for the work
ahead.

There is no time like the future, for caring.

I give you welcome to the great field of
literacy.

Thank you.

Presentation Of The National Award To Ms. Joan Ganz Cooney, President, Children's Television Workshop

Presenter
Ms. Patricia Graham
Director,
National Institute of Education

MS. GRAHAM

I am delighted to be here today not only to honor Joan Ganz Cooney, whose work is so familiar to us all, but to honor the cause of inculcating literacy, a goal for which I know we all strive. We at the National Institute of Education have been particularly insistent that we recognize that the primary reason we educate people is not for salvation, morality, mobility, or even economic gain—although any or all of those consequences may in fact result from education—but that our primary reason for education is for literacy.

In the past we have been reluctant to argue that literacy, in its broadest sense, was adequate justification for the educational system. I have argued that until we are willing to accept that the principal business of the educational enterprise is to make persons literate—able to read, write, manipulate symbols, and develop independent means of making judgements and determining actions—we will continue to charge the educational system with undertakings in which it is doomed to failure. More important, we will misunderstand the central purpose of education itself. Education is not simply a means to an end; it is a legitimate end in itself. Achieving literacy for our total population is a difficult challenge. We are unlikely to achieve genuine progress towards universal literacy unless we make it the preeminent goal of our educational system.

Universal literacy is a step closer to our grasp now than it has been in the past because of the efforts of Joan Ganz Cooney. She has taught us effective uses of television which previously were only theoretical possibilities; the Children's Television Workshop is valuable to us not only because of its enormous popularity, but be-

cause it stands as an example of spectacular success in a field where the greatest attention is so often on failure. Educational research and practice have in the past too frequently been focused on the documentation of failure, and it has too often in the past been practiced in isolation. Researchers, administrators, curriculum designers, teachers, and publishers have consistently gone about their business as if each others' activities were unimportant or non-existent. Joan Ganz Cooney has shown us that all of the people and resources which are necessary for a truly successful educational endeavor can be brought together and focused successfully.

Her combination of skills has in a way made life more difficult for all of us in education. The Congress, the foundations, the general public all now say to us, "Bring me a Sesame Street." We are fortunate to have such a high standard of success for which we must strive.

It is with great pleasure that I present you this National Award (signed by the Vice President of the United States) on the occasion of International Literacy Day.

MS. COONEY

Thank you very much, Dr. Graham. On behalf of Big Bird and all of the others who have made Sesame Street one of the world's most traveled roads, we deeply appreciate this recognition.

If I may paraphrase one of our "commercials" on Sesame Street, I would like to say a kind word for one of our sponsors. My message today is brought to you by the letters "U", "S", "O", and "E".

For whatever the Children's Television Workshop has been able to achieve in the cause of national literacy has been made possible, to a large extent, by the U.S. Office of Education.

It was among the first governmental institutions to appreciate the potential of television as a medium of education, and it has never wavered in its belief that the medium could be an effective way to reach children with programs of educational value.

The Office of Education was the largest underwriter when we began the production of Sesame Street more than 10 years ago. To this day, it continues to underwrite part of the cost of the series. Sesame Street never has had a better friend.

As Sesame Street enters its tenth season, I'm happy to report that more than 8 million youngsters in this country alone are regular beneficiaries of OE's sustained interest in using television to reach and teach preschool children.

Within months of the debut of Sesame Street, back in 1969, OE asked that we create a series that specifically addressed the reading problems of youngsters from the ages of seven to ten. The result was "The Electric Company."

As former U.S. Commissioner of Education Sidney P. Marland said at the time, "Perhaps no other innovation in the history of education has made its presence felt among so many people in so short a time . . . The extent to which American elementary schools put this teaching aid to classroom use is truly one of the remarkable events in the history of instructional television."

The Electric Company, which is now in repeat showings, starts its eighth season this fall. Some two and a half million children now watch the program in classrooms around the country, and an estimated four and a half million more see it in their homes.

Because of the Office of Education, private philanthropy and, very importantly, public broadcasting itself, Children's Television Workshop has had an opportunity to explore the potential of television for improving the literacy skills of youngsters.

If any one finding emerged from the Sesame Street and The Electric Company experiments, it was this: television and the printed word can be very effective partners in the cause of national literacy; television and print are not mutually exclusive.

Today television is a powerful teaching instrument in other phases of learning both in and outside the classroom. The potential certainly is there, and it should be explored further as a supplementary means of improving all the basic learning skills our children require to enter the mainstream of American life.

In its short history, television has

emerged as the most pervasive medium in our culture—and in that of a great many other countries as well. Television has created a new reality—particularly among youngsters.

Almost every child in this country has a television set in his or her home. And just about every preschool child spends more than one-third of his waking hours watching television.

By the age of 10 the average child spends more time watching television than he or she spends in the classroom during the week. We may not like it, nor approve of it, but it is a fact that we must face in this country and try to use to educational advantage.

Because television burst upon the national scene so quickly, we as a nation never asked the hard questions about our objectives for this powerful medium. In the minds of many, it was simply a technological advance that could collect advertising dollars and sell entertainment to vast audiences.

But now there is a growing number of people who are beginning to ask those hard questions about the objectives of television. And well they might. We as a society, by and large, continue to spend more to advertise to children than to create worthwhile programs for them to watch. Not surprisingly, criticism of television keeps growing.

Thanks to a powerful idea executed with care, the work of the Children's Television Workshop has spread throughout the world. And if it has proven anything, it is that television is worthy of serious consideration by serious people as an educational supplement.

Little is actually known about the effects of television, but one thing is sure—it's not going to go away. More study and experimentation need to be undertaken if television is to become a powerful force for enlightenment and education. But we have seen the tip of the iceberg, and can say with certainty that there is enough potential there for us to disagree with Pogo, who once said "We are surrounded by *insurmountable* opportunities."

Thank you.

National Panel

Mr. Alexander Burke
President, McGraw-Hill Book Company

Reverend Jesse Jackson
President, Operation PUSH

Mrs. Robert McNamara
Chairman, Reading Is Fundamental

Dr. Craig Phillips
State Superintendent of Public Instruction, North Carolina

Moderator
Dr. Mary F. Berry
Assistant Secretary for Education

DR. BERRY

Literacy, we have learned from history, is a demanding goal. But no aspect of education has, or should have, a higher priority than the extension of literacy to all of our people.

Though demanding, the goal of universal literacy is not unattainable. I believe that we can come to a time when 95 to 99 percent of all Americans are able to function not just at the basic level of competence, but at the level of advanced learning as well.

We must strive to produce a people who can read and who can understand and evaluate what they read; a people who can work with and understand numbers; a people who can perform basic skills, as well as gain an understanding of history, government and the sciences which goes beyond the basics.

If ever there was a time when we need to strive for this goal, it is now:

- When the National Center for Education Statistics tells us that 42 percent of the 17-year-old minority students are functionally illiterate.
- When we are told that one in eight 17-year-olds cannot read well enough to get along in life.
- When we are told that more than 20 percent of American adults are not able to fill

out forms and function effectively on their own.

- When we hear recurring complaints from businesses that those they recruit are incompetent in the basic skills.
- When achievement test scores are reportedly on a downward trend.
- When school boards are faced with lawsuits charging incompetency, irresponsibility and malpractice.

Public opinion polls tell us that national support for the movement toward literacy is strong and gaining momentum. The intensity of the public feeling on the issue is evident—in the states where legislatures are responding with minimum competency standards for their schools, and in the positive response to competency advocates such as Jesse Jackson throughout the country.

The concern has reached the halls of Congress, where the dialogue has included discussion of the establishment of national standards.

After two decades of educational reform and innovation, we are moving toward restoration—back to the fundamentals of traditional schooling.

The common view, of course, is that there is something drastically wrong with American education and that the way to correct this condition is through curricular reconstruction and competency-based testing.

Times have changed. There was a time when education was valued in and of itself. A good mind was a well-read mind; a good mind was a developed mind. Education was valued because of its potential as an economic mobility factor. Indeed, it was a necessity for mobility. Education was not always easy to come by—certainly it was not easily accessible to all. Some of us worked very hard, sometimes against great odds, to acquire an education. But education, we were told by way of motivation (and we could see its proof), could be translated into good jobs, prestige and position.

Today, one sometimes wonders if education is valued at all. Yet educational opportunity is on the upswing. The promise today is that nearly everyone can get an education and thereby get a "good job." The emphasis in what is termed the "me era" is on what education can get you or what it can buy.

Yet in today's job market, with its high unemployment rates, the capacity of education to fulfill this promise is questioned.

Moreover, we have experienced turbulent times in recent decades. We have been through:

- The assassination of three of our leaders,
- The Vietnam War,
- Civil and racial disturbances on our campuses and in the streets of our inner cities, and
- The near impeachment of a president.

At the same time, we began the attack on major social ills such as poverty and segregation. We started to address the elimination of sexism and to pursue affirmative action programs.

And our schools were at the center of all that social conflict and change. Addressing each of the major social issues in our country generated new situations, new school constituencies, new student needs—and special ones in some cases.

I am suggesting that many societal factors beyond the school environment come to bear on the problem of illiteracy.

In earlier days, schools did not compete with television for the student's attention. Students came to school predisposed to learn, motivated and encouraged by their home and community forces. Family evenings often centered on children's homework; curfews encouraged a stay-at-home climate.

Today, polls tell us that lack of student discipline and apathy are major problems in the schools. The family structure has changed, and it is television which tells us that it is 10 o'clock and asks if we know where our children are.

Then, too, there is concern about drugs, alcoholism, teenage pregnancy, and school vandalism. Administrators point to high rates of absenteeism and the lack of parental involvement in the schools.

The nature of our problems is no longer simple or clear. It is even difficult to say that one factor impacts more on the problem than another. But it can honestly be said that the problems in the schools are a part of the social and economic patterns of this country.

It is not my intention to whitewash our nation's schools. A part of the responsibility for our current concerns must be borne by the teachers and admanistrators in our learning institutions.

But I am compelled to note that people who work in our schools are not vastly unlike those who work as lawyers, politicians, government officials and other professionals. Some are indifferent and selfserving; some are inept; most work hard to accomplish an honest and good job; and some are extremely skillful and successful. All are susceptible to the accountability and performance standards of their various constituencies. But they all need the help and support of parents and community.

There is no question but that we require strong leaders in our schools today. Just look at the challenges which society has placed at the doorsteps of our schools throughout history. What other institution has been charged with such burdens? It is possible that we have not really failed in our schools. Might we not be floundering from the weight of all the problems which have come our way? Is it possible that we have expected far too much from our schools and then turned far too critical?

Consider for a moment what we ask of our schools in this country. We ask them to make our children literate; to teach them to think; to help shape their characters; to prepare them for their roles as citizens; to provide them the skills for gainful employment and advanced education. On top of that, we ask them to tackle the problems of our communities and our nation. And we make those demands to the accompaniment of severely limited resources.

We need to stretch our federal dollars by indirect techniques such as replication and information dissemination to reach more people. We could reach many more through model programs for school districts to adopt. In some places, this already is being done.

We need to determine the best usages of testing in our schools, and the federal effort is already moving on this issue.

We need to re-examine the whole area of technical vocational education in the light of the current employment predicament and glutted professional markets.

We need to give strength to our whole basic skills and literacy effort. We need more programs of this nature in secondary schools. We need better coordination with state and locally-funded programs. We need more parent involvement in all school programs, including Title I and Right to Read. As we develop federal policy, incentives for that involvement should be an intrinsic part of any program. We need to devote more attention to mathematical skills and how to use them in daily life.

We must also ask if we have not altered our view of what the role of our schools should be. Do we view our schools as keeping our children in a holding pattern until employment trends offer release, or do we see our schools as passages and contributory agents to the larger society? These issues must be examined in the context of what we anticipate our future will bring.

We in the administration have been as concerned as anyone in the country about these vital issues. We are giving more money and support for basic skills achievement and remediation than have been put there in the last twelve years, because we do believe that something has to be done about improving the achievement of students in this country. And we recommended to the Congress a Basic Skills and Educational Quality Act because a major priority of ours is improving the quality of education. So if money alone could solve the problem of literacy in this country, there would be no want of funds at the federal level.

If commitment on the part of Federal agencies were the answer, I think the problem would be solved. If the answer were commitment on the part of the State Agencies that have final responsibility for the quality of education, I think the problem would already have been solved. I don't mean to say that the problem is not something for which we have responsibility; but I think it is also clear that teachers cannot teach if a child is not receptive or hates school, and that you can't teach a child if the child is not in school, and that you can't teach a child if the child is in an altered state of mind when he or she is in school.

And you certainly can't hope to change any of those factors without the strong support of the parents and community institutions. Educators have had that support in many communities in the past, and they still have it in some communities, but they do not have it, unfortunately, in a number of others.

And they need all the help they can get. Progress on this issue, as on any issue, will not be made by the creation of scapegoats. Progress demands real and creative thinking about what to do. So on this International Literacy Day, it is altogether fitting and proper that we dedicate ourselves to the goal of literacy and the attainment of literacy, and that we support the international movement to address the literacy crisis here and around the world. Those of you who agreed to serve on this panel can help us understand how the government and the private sector can help to improve literacy, especially in this country, and perhaps around the world.

I would like to begin, if I may, with Mrs. Robert S. McNamara, who is the Chairman of the Board of Reading is Fundamental

MRS. McNAMARA

Thank you, Dr. Berry. I have been asked to speak on the responsibility of the Federal government in meeting a problem this country faces today—increasing functional illiteracy. Functional illiteracy is becoming part of the jargon, and jargon too often befogs meaning. So I would like to spell out precisely what the terms means. It means, simply, that a functional illiterate *cannot* read a want ad, for example; *cannot* read simple instructions; *cannot* fill out a job application; certainly, *cannot* read a newspaper, a magazine, or a book for information or for entertainment. In short, it means that for the functional illiterate, the world and the future are harsh—frightening, unrewarding, meager.

One out of five Americans over the age of 18 is functionally illiterate. That is an astonishing, depressing, and alarming statistic in a country where universal education is celebrated, where so much money is spent on education, and indeed, in a country that has lived by the word. More than 200 years ago, we know that when it came time to form our "more perfect union," it was the unique, stirring, and profound ideas and language that fired the colonists and that eventually bound them together as one nation.

What can our government do about functional illiteracy today? What *should* it do? Where does the responsibility lie? Although I strongly believe that the government has a role to play, I also believe that it cannot, and *should* not, bear the entire responsibility. Surely, we could not ask, nor want, the Federal government to bring up our children. But we do want, and need, all the help it can give us, and I believe that government and the private sector can work well and effectively together. Indeed, I know it can every day that I walk into the national offices of Reading is Fundamental. Joan Mondale, who early worked with RIF, describes RIF as "one of the best examples of cooperative efforts between private citizens and the Federal government." And we have tried to keep it that way.

Let me tell you a little bit about RIF for those who don't know about it. RIF is now 12 years old. It started modestly as a pilot project. A group of us in Washington realized that many children had no access to books that would interest them, that many did not have books in their homes, and that above all, children were *not* reading. We knew their teachers were working hard to get the youngsters into books, but we also knew the children were resisting. We thought we could help with a motivational program, one that would *make* the children want to read.

How to motivate them? We decided we would let children choose, from a wide variety of paperback books, the books *they* wanted to read; we also decided to let the children *keep* the books as their own. Finally, we knew we had to involve their parents in the activity. This was to be a grassroots program.

The pilot was so successful that it attracted support from foundations, individuals and corporations, and the idea began to take hold around the country. Ten years later, the Congress appropriated monies for the Inexpensive Book Distribution Program; and HEW, through the U.S. Office

of Education, contracted with Reading is Fundamental to administer the program.

The Congress was wise. It stipulated that these were *matching* funds to buy books, and that to qualify for the funds, a local community had to meet certain criteria and had to raise its part of the money for the books going to its children.

That was motivation, for today there are more than 2,300 reading motivation programs in the 50 states, the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and the Virgin Islands. Thus far in the 1977–78 school year, more than two-and-a-half million children are choosing, for keeps, more than 10 million books. The success of the program, the children's enthusiastic reception, the parents and teachers and principals who welcome it, has attracted 80,000 volunteers—men and women who give of their time, their energy and their resources to make reading fundamental in their communities.

Perhaps this is why Joan Mondale also says that RIF is "a giant step in producing a literate and informed citizenry for our future."

But the question is: Where does the Federal government fit into a private organization like RIF? Well, RIF is designed to get books to children and children into books, into reading, into learning. Each RIF project, although meeting our criteria, is different from the other, adapting to local circumstances. There is no rigidity. Parents, educators, librarians, businessmen, civic leaders, club members—all work together on all facets of the program. They raise their funds with bake sales, garage sales, amateur theatricals; they ask local merchants for help, give spaghetti dinners, and have book fairs. They choose books, set up activities, organize distributions. They use imagination, and they are a zestful, independent group of people. The government fits into this *after* each local project has raised funds by matching those funds and enabling each community to buy more books for more children. These are not textbooks, as I am sure you know, but books that will entice the children and bring them back for more.

To me this is the best of all worlds. Responsible, enthusiastic citizens working with their government. There are no handouts, no charity. No one likes either. But they do like rewards for what they produce. RIF does just that through the Inexpensive Book Distribution Program—and more. We have thousands of letters from parents who tell us how their children are expanding their vocabularies; we have letters from librarians who tell us circulation rises when RIF is in operation; we have principal on principal, and heads of state education departments, who write enthusiastically urging us to do more. Best of all, we have sheaves of letters from children saying, "Thank you for the books."

This country was built on imagination, improvisation and dreams. I think that the Reading is Fundamental partnership with government is a combination of all three. And I can recommend no better idea than to establish private-public partnerships where we all participate and we all benefit. Where we make it a way of life that the books, the tools for learning, are available for all children to choose and to own. Thank you.

DR. BERRY

Thank you very much, Mrs. McNamara, for telling us about this prominent example of a successful private-public sector project.

MRS. McNAMARA

Dr. Berry, I never went any place but that I had a bag of books. I got into an elevator once, doing some fundraising in the corporate world of New York, and a gentleman looked at me in the elevator and said, "You selling books?"

DR. BERRY

Actually, I am sure that you could sell them. Because as I can personally attest, you are a most formidable political force in maintaining support for your program. And I believe that our Secretary, Joe Califano, would agree with that too. Most formidable!

If we could now turn to another example of private sector involvement and call on Mr. Burke, President of McGraw Hill.

MR. BURKE

Thank you, Mary.

A popular poet of 9th century China once remarked: "The world cheats those who cannot read." The results of illiteracy today remain the same. In addition, the world also cheats those who will not read. I believe that the problem of functional illiteracy, which by latest estimate may afflict over 40 million people in American society, is compounded by the practical illiteracy of millions more who know how to read but rarely do.

A great amount of research and many individually successful efforts have been achieved in the area of literacy. While the Right to Read goal of eliminating functional illiteracy by 1980 seems now incapable of achievement, the failure is not one of neglect but of failing to give such an ambitious goal the highest national priority and funding. To eliminate functional illiteracy is more difficult and probably more expensive than either eliminating cancer or landing an astronaut on the moon, and possibly more expensive than both. But the cost of not solving this problem may in the long run be even greater. One necessary solution to the immense problems of the poor and the disadvantaged is to teach them to read. It is an old axiom:

> Give a man a fish, feed him for a day.
> Teach him how to fish, feed him for a lifetime.

The same is true of reading:

Teach a person to read and you will feed him for a lifetime.

Recommendation No. 1

I believe the first requirement is for the government and its citizens to assess what the merits and costs of a commitment to eliminate functional illiteracy would be. If taken seriously, it will require nothing less than a reassessment of national priorities. We need *a serious, extended full-scale assessment of whether we are, as a society, willing to commit the resources necessary to a goal this ambitious*. I believe this is our first and compelling priority. If we are not willing to do this, then both our goals and our strategies will be different.

The first questions we need to answer then are these:

1. Why, as a country, should we commit ourselves to eliminating functional illiteracy and what does this immense commitment really involve?
2. Are we willing as a country to make this major reallocation of priorities?

My point is not that throwing money at the problem will solve it, but that we must first decide what order of priority we give to this problem, and then what human and financial resources are needed to achieve the level of priority that we set.

Recommendation No. 2

Because of the range and complexity of the problem of adult illiteracy, and because in the long run it is more effective to prevent problems than to have to solve them, I urge that we devote primary attention and funding to making a competent reader of every student in our schools. Specifically, we need to increase educational Title funding, especially Title 1, so that new initiatives can be started and old ones maintained. Many of the successful programs of the 1960s have been dropped because of lack of funding. Much good research, practical innovations and new materials were developed from Title funds, especially for beginning reading. Those initiatives, which are now slowed or stopped, never even reached the stage of developmental reading.

Recommendation No. 3

As a publisher close to the schools, I am troubled by sudden shifts in priorities. Major endeavors to solve difficult problems require long and continuous effort. Major changes in priorities and funding over short periods of time erode support for programs. Not long ago, the Office of Education wanted schools and publishers to make a major commitment to career education. Today that commitment seems to be mired, like a stranded vessel in the mud. Meanwhile, there is great resentment among those who made commitments and a loss of credibility in government initiatives. This is only one example, but the point is that priorities must be decided upon and then persevered in for periods longer than

one presidential administration. *Funding growth must be continuous and allow for more than staying even with inflation.*

Recommendation No. 4

In a report to be published by McGraw-Hill in the spring entitled, *Adult Illiteracy in the United States: A Report to The Ford Foundation*, the authors make a central recommendation that I wholeheartedly endorse—

to establish new, pluralistic, community-based initiatives whose specific objective will be to serve the most disadvantaged hard core poor, the bulk of whom never enroll in any existing programs.

The essence of this recommendation is to get local solutions to local problems. We need to implement the basic findings of this report.

Recommendation No. 5

It seems evident to many who have worked on the problems of adult illiteracy that television, the most powerful of the media in America today, has a major and as yet untapped role to play in any successful attack on adult illiteracy. In *On the Move*, developed by the BBC, the British made massive use of TV broadcasting on a national basis. This effort gave a focus and support to the many other initiatives on adult illiteracy that were already working and enhanced the overall effectiveness of the adult literacy campaign in Great Britain. I recommend we *assess a similar initiative for the United States.*

Recommendation No. 6

As part of any comprehensive support for literacy, we need to identify, support and increase the already successful programs. I recommend here that we place *priority on evaluating and supporting our existing successes over any new research.* Such programs as Reading is Fundamental, Right to Read, The American Reading Council, and many others too numerous to list deserve our full support. But we need a means of evaluating their successes and to decide how best to support their efforts.

Recommendation No. 7

Rooted deeply in our problems of literacy is the growing crisis of our print culture. Over the past five years there has been a steady decline in the number of hardcover and paperback educational books sold, as well as in the number of hardcover trade books sold. The units of paid circulated newspapers in relation to the adult population 16 years of age and over has been on the decline since 1972. Over the past ten years, libraries have been experiencing a per capita decrease in circulation and a lower acquisition of books. In addition, the United States ranks 24th in the world in the number of titles produced per capita.

Why should children value reading if the society in which they live doesn't seem to value it? The high literacy rate in Japan is often attributed to success of the Japan Reading Association in achieving parental involvement in children's reading.

There is a danger that literacy in America is becoming a specialist's skill. Such a trend would ultimately erode the basis of democracy which is the diffusion of knowledge among a free people.

My last recommendation is that we *commission a group of informed people to assess this growing crisis of the print culture in America and to determine our initiatives for improving the literacy rate in the United States.*

The Association of American Publishers, which I represent here today, is the major voice of the book publishing industry in the United States. This association is committed to a more active role during the coming years in seeking solutions for and strategies to promote literacy. In his inaugural address at the AAP Annual Meeting in May of this year, Chairman Winthrop Knowlton set as a major priority a determination of how we in the book publishing industry could more effectively use our efforts to disseminate skills, knowledge and information to help those who need to achieve higher standards of literacy if they are to survive and cope.

In this effort we hope to involve other areas of the private sector—especially our colleagues in the communications business.

One major project we will undertake will be the organization of a national conference to be co-sponsored by the Right to Read Office of the U.S. Office of Education. The conference, in the spring of 1979, will involve educators, government officials and concerned citizens in a study of motivation for reading—what is now working, and what programs can be successfully duplicated for use in local communities throughout the nation.

In closing, I would like to summarize my critical, underlying emphasis—

First, let's decide on our priorities.

Second, let's commit ourselves to them and fund them adequately and continuously over a long period.

Third, let's establish a means for continuous evaluation of our efforts.

Thank you.

DR. BERRY

Thank you very much, Mr. Burke, for some very interesting and thought-provoking recommendations, including the one that priorities should be maintained through a shift in presidential administrations. I wondered how one would go about insisting that be the case. We will assume, though, that there won't be a change any time soon, so we don't have to worry about that.

I will now turn to the distinguished Superintendent of Public Instruction for North Carolina, who is also the president-elect of the Chief State School Officers Organization, Dr. Craig Phillips.

DR. PHILLIPS

Thank you, Mary. You all don't know it, but we've all been sitting here wondering what order Mary would use, and I'm delighted that you've left Jesse for last.

Edwin Newman intimidated all of us, as you know, and I'm sitting here on edge just like everybody else has been in terms of saying the right thing. So I want to utter the prayer that the youngster made when he fell into the big barrel of molasses and went all the way under. When he came up it was dripping all the way around and he said, "Lord, make my mouth worthy of this here assignment." I feel that way strongly.

On this date we recognize again the commitment of this country to an adequate and appropriate educational opportunity for *all* of its people—a commitment made in a number of ways and through a number of responsible voices at the very beginning of our existence as a new nation. That commitment has more and more been translated into demands that the basic result of an appropriate educational opportunity shall be a "condition or quality of being literate, especially the ability to read and write," defined in our dictionaries as literacy. Definitions which go beyond that classify the literate person as "knowledgeable, educated, well informed, familiar with literature, learned." However, the true thrust of the President's proclamation and the 12 year commitment of UNESCO is a call for adequate communication skills—effective reading and writing skills for all people. Today, that call is reflected across America in the use of the word competence—"the state or quality of being capable—properly or well qualified"—as a new description of literacy as a survival skill.

So now we commit ourselves in a more realistic way, with more understanding of the degree and dimensions of the issue, to universal, continuous education resulting in a 100% literate or competent people.

The institution with the prime responsibility for making that dream possible is the school, and we must be reminded constantly that in this country the school rests in the hands of the people. Thus the task of advancing literacy—in President Carter's words, "To promote literacy as central to our efforts to improve the lives of all people and guarantee their basic human rights"—truly belongs to the people in their communities and to the states. It is difficult to fully assess the magnitude of that responsibility—but it *is* a clear one, and deserves the understanding, support, and commitment of all those who are a part of the decision-making process in this country. I am completely convinced that the respective states and territories are far more capable, far more willing, far better organized, and much more deeply committed to getting the job done than ever in our his-

tory. With help and encouragement and stimulation from our national leaders—our national voice—our national decision-makers—the job can be done. Before I develop a brief scenario, let me back up and make three basic points.

First—while *literacy* refers to the ability to read and write, *oracy* (a term coined by the British educator Andrew Wilkinson) refers to the ability to speak and listen. Both research and common sense suggest that successfully teaching kids to read and write depends upon whether adequate attention has been paid to *oral* language development. Speaking and listening are language processes which create the very foundation on which reading and writing are built. In our efforts to help all kids read, we must not forget how it is done. Each language process depends upon the other. Classroom instruction simply must be predicated on this philosophical premise.

Second—while embracing as a value the goal of eliminating illiteracy in the world, we must not forget the uniqueness of individuals. The ability to read, for example, is a relative matter. Every communication skill is a meaning-making process, and meaning-making is something which individuals do at various levels of sophistication. It was this observation that the German poet-philosopher Goethe had in mind when he said in his sixties that he was still learning to read. Acquiring the ability to read, to write, to speak, to listen . . . even to think, the greatest of all gifts to humankind . . . is a life-long developmental process. It only begins in school.

Third—the elimination of illiteracy in the world—indeed, in my state of North Carolina and in the states and territories of my colleagues, 56 other chief state school officers—requires a team effort, an effort by people of all races, cultures and socioeconomic backgrounds, *using* their institutions to meet the challenge of a common problem. As the British clergyman-poet John Donne put it centures ago, "If a pebble be washed away by the sea, then Europe is the less. . . . Every man's death diminishes me; therefore, send not to ask for whom the bell tools. It tolls for thee." Our concern about illiteracy in North Carolina is but a grain of sand compared to our larger collective concern about illiteracy on the shores of the world's nations. Illiteracy spawns illiteracy; literacy spawns literacy.

In my state's annual testing program to determine achievement levels of kids in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, 9 and 11, we have found that the two factors which most influence scores on standardized tests, a measure of the degree of literacy in children, are family income and educational level of parents. The sociological and economic factors that bear on the issue of literacy are legion. Jobs providing incomes above the poverty level, continuing education programs for adults, a renewal of valuing the printed page over electronic forms of communication, society's greater willingness to provide "payoffs" or rewards for reading and writing ability—all of these are crucial to winning the battle against illiteracy in *developed* nations, not to mention *developing* nations.

Schools need help. This conference is a testimony to the willingness of many able and resourceful people to offer that help.

North Carolina is one of those newly committed states with newly strengthened capabilities. What I will describe briefly is not unique to North Carolina. It is basically true for most or all of the states in varying degrees and emphasis—the evidence is out there.

We do have a plan. We do know where we are, where we want to go, how we intend to get there, what our priorities are and how we shall evaluate our progress. The governor of our state has genuinely committed himself and his state to the achievement of the highest possible level of literacy. A lay State Board of Education, our General Assembly, local governmental bodies, county commissioners and local boards of education—*the decision-making structure of a state*—has literally rolled up its sleeves and developed plans for successful response to that 100% expectancy of which I spoke earlier. There is, along with the clear recognition of deficiencies, needs, and challenges unmet, an atmosphere for achievement—a sense of the possible—a conviction that it can be done—in the air everywhere. That's the first ingredient. Let me quickly list some of the others:

A full commitment to early, effective intervention in the educational life of each child; a fully state-supported kindergarten program for 97% of our five-year-olds; a primary reading program which will be fully supported statewide by the end of next year for 6, 7, and 8 year olds—400,000 youngsters K-3; one trained staff member for each 13 or fewer children; vast improvements in instructional materials and tools; continuing support for ongoing staff training; a structured volunteer program which creates an environment of individualized education for every young child in North Carolina.

- A commitment by law and by dollar support to full funding for exceptional children in North Carolina—retarded, learning disabled, emotionally disturbed, physically handicapped, gifted and talented; $75 million specially allocated state funds above and beyond general support for 150,000 identified youngsters with special needs, and final provisions for approximately 50,000 more coming in the next two years.
- Significant increases in allotted professional and support personnel in our schools, with a foreseeable state-targeted goal in the next 5 years of one full teaching position for every 23 students, plus all other support positions in media service, counseling, administration, psychology, social services, etc. This reflects a realistic goal of 1 person employed for each 10 or fewer students.
- A mandated statewide testing program in reading and mathematics in grades 1, 2, 3, 6, and 9, and a mandated minimum competency test in reading and mathematics at the 11th grade level.
- A remediation program of approximately $9 million, specifically earmarked for the estimated 16 to 20,000 unsuccessful 11th grade students, and a long-range program over the next six years targeted at remediation for kids in trouble from 7 to 12.
- Redirection of Title I compensatory funds to our middle grades as remediation for 10, 11, and 12 year-olds as they begin to fall toward that bottomless pit.
- A state-funded community school program—$3 million seed money this year and more to come—to capture the strength, vitality and support of parents and citizens as directly involved participants in the educational process.
- A full set of adult basic education opportunities in a 57 unit community college/technical institute system; extended day programs in the secondary schools; use of special CETA programs geared to kids with special remediation needs; and other types of special effort.

All the above and some other scattered elements make up North Carolina's burgeoning "educational jigsaw puzzle," which is beginning to take clarity of form and fuller meaning for each individual child and adult in our state. All of that puzzle in its ultimate form pertains in one way or another to the search for individual literacy.

We are on our way—other states are on their way—this nation is on the way. We have some answers, but we have more questions. Perhaps we do not even know *all* the questions. Undeniably, in a world where print is a nearly universal value, literacy is a human right. And perhaps the most basic of basics that we must get back to—if we ever left it—is to enable people to assert their human rights.

My favorite poem about kids has to do with dreams; "We dream great dreams for our children . . . but only through our deeds do our dreams come true." I think that's the key to what we are doing. Thank you.

DR. BERRY

Thank you very much, Dr. Phillips, for those inspiring words. I asked the Reverend Jesse Jackson, the national President of Operation Push, to speak last, because I thought he was in a particularly good position to provide evidence of the Biblical pronouncement that the last shall be first. Or in any case that he might provide some evidence of the pronouncement that the meek shall inherit the Earth. In either case, we will turn to Reverend Jesse Jackson. Thank you.

REV. JACKSON

Thank you very much, Dr. Berry, panelists, and those of you present.

First, I want to thank President Carter, Secretary Califano, Commissioner Boyer, Dr. Berry, and others for pulling this together. In my judgment this is moving from a human rights policy which advocates good to a human rights policy which is a step beyond advocacy—doing something about it.

My role, as I understand it, is to close the communication gap between the literate and the illiterate. I say that because I want Ed to know that he ain't goin' to intimidate me! Not today. If I alliterate some illiteracy he should obliterate it . . . and move on.

As I listen to these assessments of "what next," I want to bring some of our experiences in the field to bear on this discussion. First, it is difficult for people to fight functional illiteracy if they are functionally immoral. Functionally irresponsible. Functionally uncaring. Teachers and parents and government officials must be functionally moral to be vessels or conduits worthy of bearing a message so challenging as the need to move from illiteracy to literacy.

Truth, like electricity, needs a conduit. An awful lot of power is carried in a conduit, and if a conduit has loose wires nothing will happen, if it has frayed endings nothing will happen, and if its wires are exposed nothing will happen. So if those who are to convey this message have exposed wires of race or wires of indifference, they will be unable to communicate—not because they do not have information, but because they do not have the moral wherewithall to convey that information. We need inspired vessels who can see beyond the restrictions of legalism and materialism to convey this message. In other words, we need the will to teach *all* children.

Today Chicago public schools are traumatized over the question of race. White parents are picketing several schools into which blacks are to expand. We have a desegregation plan which does not meet state or HEW guidelines–yet four years later it is still being funded. That's functionally immoral, functionally irresponsible. When educators or administrators play racial games in that way they are less likely to be heard. So we need vessels who can convey this information.

We must also accept the premise that the first step in public schools across the country is to restore order and a sense of self-discipline. The Gallup Poll last week indicated that people perceive discipline as the number one problem in public schools. It is interesting that in rating such issues as financial woes and desegregation they placed parental detachment last. Perhaps that reflected the role that parents need to play and can play in modern society, but it also suggests a profound feeling of impotence when people consider themselves as parents—a sense of being unable to do something about the situation. The fact of the matter is that this massive detachment of parents is the number one problem. Parents represent the foundation of the educational process—the place from which it originates. So our perception of the relationship between problem and solution, in my opinion, has to change.

This is the reason the question of moral authority becomes so fundamental relative to the problem of discipline. If one is a moral authority who is believable and trusted, when one demands discipline it is perceived as therapy and responded to. If one is not a moral authority and demands discipline, it is perceived as punishment and reacted to. Both therapy and punishment involve pain. The difference is perception. When the football coach says, "Run two miles past the point of exhaustion and play even when you are hurt," as preparation for something worthwhile, his moral authority is able to go beyond all of the little things that ordinarily interfere with the process of education.

The beginning of our moral authority in the schools is the premise that our children can learn. One of the rude awakenings that I experienced once we began to delve more deeply into education is that it is a matter of debate in many places as to what children can learn. Many people teach and don't believe that black children, or brown children, or Indian children, or poor children, or southern children can learn. To believe that children can learn, and to

overcome the cynical and pessimistic arguments to the contrary, is a major hurdle for the conveyor of information to clear.

Our second premise is that our children *ought* to learn. It is the moral thing to do. And thirdly, that they *must* learn. It is imperative for the oppressed—reading is revolutionary. You cannot hold the people down any lower than you hold their minds.

It has also been our assessment that the problem fundamentally is not one of lack of genes. It is one of lack of an agenda. Therefore, it is not a natural disorder, it is a social disorder. Thus we are responsible and can do something about it. We do best what we do most. And we're losing the competition for the minds of our children.

We must again assess the problem and the role of school in relationship to the inadequate number of TV and radio executives here today. Perhaps we are still victimized by "future shock." Maybe it has not occurred to us yet, in all of its glory, that this is the first generation that by age fifteen has seen eighteen thousand hours of TV—averaging better than three hours and forty-eight minutes a night. Compared to eleven thousand hours of school, assuming no strikes—bad assumption—and less than three thousand hours of the church or specific moral character development. This is the first generation that by age twenty has engaged in only one activity more than watch TV—sleep. And in this extreme competition for the minds of our children, the extreme power of the mass media requires a radical redistribution of responsibility. Media executives cannot miss a meeting like this when they are the primary transmitters of folkways and mores and priorities in our culture. The teacher is not the primary transmitter of information. It is not to some professor up in some eastern school that we now look for great words of wisdom, if you will, it is to the Cronkites and Eric Sevareids and Ed Newmans of the world.

I was in Louisiana two weeks ago, with a cross-section of about six hundred people—ministers of all faiths, business leaders, community leaders, and educational leaders—who made the collective decision to move beyond the historical debate of races and faces. They were going to comply with state and HEW guidelines, desegregate the schools, remove racial trauma as a primary issue, and fight illiteracy. It made the headlines all over the state of Louisiana—a commitment to fight illiteracy.

That's Louisiana, that's that La.—the other L. A. is making headlines fighting the law. No matter what programmatic image Los Angeles projects, its preoccupation is with the b's, as I put it. The blacks, the browns, the busses, the budgets, and the buildings. At best it might achieve some balance of the b's. It has no energy left to deal with the a's—attendance, atmosphere, attitudes, attention, and achievement. It is not preoccupied with fighting illiteracy. That's in its proposals, but that is not in reality its conduct. There are some primary external impediments in judgment.

We must be willing to fight, if we are going to fight illiteracy. Because those of us who want people to become literate must be vessels people will hear and respond to, not merely react to. Racial trauma is still the number one impediment to excellence in American education. We still have too many officials in education who continue to float with the law. And as our schools lose community prestige, they become vulnerable to the forces and the foils of education, which therefore fund us inadequately and unequally.

And so in the basic urban school that we visit, we find that our children are victims of mass media diversion on one hand, and social and moral decay on the other. I'm talking about values that lend themselves to a rise in violence—mass media diversion, moral and social decay, and massive parental detachment.

That brings me to my last point. As we struggle to open the doors of opportunity—and by that I mean desegregated education—there is another side to the dialectic. There are internal impediments to excellence. All of our children, no matter what their condition or previous condition, must accept the fact that effort must exceed opportunity for change to take place. Basic effort. Effort. Our children are not so dumb that they will not learn if they study. On the other hand, no matter what the historical circumstance is or was, they will never learn unless they do study.

There is a fundamental question of effort. We are arriving at fantastic athletic achievement levels because we average three hours a day after school, practicing without radio, television, telephone or social visitation. If we spend the same amount of energy developing cognitive skills as we spend on motor skills, we will become as proficient in reading and reasoning, writing and counting, as we are in jumping, running, and skipping. That is a question of priority and effort—not a question even of availability of money or opportunity. We must organize, in my judgment, a resistance movement against mass media diversion, moral decay and parental detachment.

In Chicago, in Kansas City and in Los Angeles this year, PUSH is organizing a parenting movement. We hope to broaden it around the nation. We are asking parents to do five things. One, to sign a pledge that they will rededicate themselves to relating to their child and that child's future. And many parents don't want to make that much of a commitment. And that's basic. Second, that they will go to the school and exchange home numbers with their child's teacher. Third, that they will monitor study hours at least two hours a night—with radio and TV off. Fourth, that they will go to the school and pick up report cards four times a year. And last, that they will go to the Boards of Education and pick up their child's test scores. So we will not complain in the twelfth grade that the child is reading at the seventh grade level. We ought to know in the eighth grade that the child is reading at the seventh grade level.

Thank you very much.

DR. BERRY

Thank you very much, Reverend Jackson. Let me just say that we in HEW have so much confidence in your approach that we've been giving it some support from the tax dollars. We hope that it goes a long way to improving literacy in this country.

I now turn the program back over to Mr. Newman.

DISCUSSION

EDWIN NEWMAN

Of the many interesting questions that have been sent up, one dealt directly with the point that Jesse was making at the end. The President's Basic Skills and Educational Quality Act has called for a closer partnership with parents. How can illiterate parents be partners? This was directed to you, Dr. Berry, but all members should feel free to comment on it.

DR. BERRY

There are a number of ways that they can be partners. They can instill in their children the importance of education and educational achievement. In the community from which I come, parents who are illiterate themselves often do a great deal to make their children understand the importance of education. The key is the motivation that the parents can give. Also, parents can read to children, an activity which we recognize as important from all available educational research. Parents who do not even read themselves can use teaching and reading machines in order to read to their children. There are ways of doing these things—and in the legislation you refer to, there is a provision for funding teaching materials and equipment so that parents will be able to help their children with this problem.

JESSE JACKSON

A parent does not have to be able to read to be practically literate. Parents can care and chastise and show interest without being able to read or write at all. Moreover, there can be a partnership between parent and teacher. Often, if the parent would give support and chastise and care, teachers would have the time to transmit skills, because they wouldn't have to spend time fighting for students' attention.

I raise this point of practical literacy because my grandmother could not and can not read or write. But she took the responsibility to make me either pretend I was

trying to overcome that or fall asleep at it.

Before I got to school my grandmother had taught me sky, sun, moon, stars, dog, cat, water, flowers. I knew most of what I know about the *whole* world—it was a matter of the school's embellishing it. I say that, Dr. Berry, because we cannot extend barriers that give parents a sense of inadequacy, when they are so much more adequate even now than we give them credit for being.

EDWIN NEWMAN

What role can competency tests play in the struggle to achieve universal literacy in this country?

Dr. Phillips.

DR. PHILLIPS

Well, a very quick response. I think that competency tests have put the focus on some of the things that many may have known and talked about and described—and the focus is now producing results. If we are genuinely willing to respond to the evidence with not just dollars, but with the kind of commitment we were talking about, then the new competency tests will pay off for us. But we must have that serious commitment behind us, rather than use the tests in a negative way.

JESSE JACKSON

There are some real fears in the black community about those tests—real paranoia about it—because we've had some bad experiences with tests historically. At one time they used blood tests not to make us healthy, but to disenfranchise us. Then they used literacy tests to keep us from voting. So black people tend to see competency tests as a way to delete and destroy, not to develop and to expand. The politics of the testing, returning to the question of moral authority, is that the tester has to be a trusted person.

This past summer, an administrator in Chicago, based upon some community support, said that one thousand children would not be promoted to the eighth grade because they could not read adequately. We were sufficiently organized so that we could respond when his motives were accused of being racist. Collectively we had decided that emotional reactions were against our best interests. In this situation, tests were used to close a gap, not to close down black colleges, eliminate black teachers, and develop a way of sending us to jail while somebody else goes to college. Again, I am concerned that we fight for literacy tests, and fight for competency tests. But those who give them must know that there are mines out there—mines that will blow up unless a collective effort is made.

DR. BERRY

Our official position is that we support the use of competency tests by local jurisdictions if they choose to use them, and will provide advice, technical assistance, and funding for that. However, we have neither the power, the interest, or the authority to insist that anyone use such tests.

EDWIN NEWMAN

I am going to paraphrase a question which was written down. According to this question, literacy is defined primarily as reading and the ability to read and write. The question went on to ask, more specifically, why we stop helping children develop a capacity to speak and listen.

Do we, in fact, discourage the ability to speak and listen when we begin to teach children to read and write?

DR. PHILLIPS

For materials and curriculum change in the schools, the two have increasingly gone together. In developing early reading skills, oral vocabulary is the key to the ability to decode the printed vocabulary. I think if you study the trend of curriculum change over the last ten years, it can be demonstrated, in textbooks for example, that the amount of attention to speaking and listening right from early learning through high school has increased very significantly.

EDWIN NEWMAN

I will put this question to you, Mr. Burke. What responsibility do publishers have to incorporate new insights from research and innovative literacy programs in published materials? Why do they all advertise how "old fashioned" they are?

MR. BURKE

I haven't seen any ads like that lately. The publisher's responsibility on literacy and on research is a very strong one, and one we handle very closely with the universities. We are just in the process of setting up centers with a variety of universities around the country to do increasing amounts of research on oral vocabulary, on testing and materials, and on the relationship of research to learning. For example, we are looking into the question of how children learn best in terms of type, legibility, what kinds of illustrations the children learn best from, and what combinations of illustrations and the printed word they learn best from. So there is a close relationship between research and textbooks. We are constantly looking to bring in new insights as quickly as possible.

The problem is often one of change. How fast can you accommodate? What kind of teacher training needs to go on to create curriculum change at the same time?

With regard just to the last point, I don't think publishers advertise that they're old-fashioned. In fact, one of the things we often complain about is that new books are adopted slowly in the schools. Some schools are using books that are twenty or thirty years old. If they don't change books, the books will be perceived to be old-fashioned. People will come and complain very often to publishers that we have not done the full job of recognizing the roles of women in our textbooks, or showing the right roles for minority groups. When we look into that, however, we normally find that they're using a book fifteen years old.

EDWIN NEWMAN

I think we had better make this one the last question. Why have government programs placed so much stress on standardized pre-test and post-test scores, and what alternatives are being used or ought to be used in federal guidelines?

DR. BERRY

I think these have been emphasized because they are the only measures that anyone could think of to determine how funds could be allocated at the time. If one could find a reliable substitute, we would be willing to look at it. I don't know if the question implies that it is somehow wrong to use this approach. But the reason for the practice is that it seemed to be an appropriate way to make the allocations.

EDWIN NEWMAN

Well, we thank the panel very, very much. And we thank the audience. Dr. Berry, do you have something else to say about this?

DR. BERRY

I promised someone out there that, even if I got no question about it, I would speak of the literacy problem as it relates to women. Some sixty percent of the world's illiterates identified by UNESCO today are women. Moreover, the number of females, and the proportion of females who are illiterate, is increasing. That should be taken into account when one is trying to ascertain what kinds of programs to offer.

EDWIN NEWMAN

Jesse?

JESSE JACKSON

We have been jiving at you today for being so word-conscious, but that has forced me to think seriously about the concept of oral tradition. We transmit a lot through oral tradition. Historically, there has been alongside it a written or literate tradition. Now we are competing with a visual tradition—"I saw it and I heard it and I remembered it," as a kind of substitute for writing it or repeating it.

When I was in formal school there was

almost a deemphasis on the significance of speaking words eloquently. Yet there is a tradition of teachers who held students captive because they transmitted so much of the tradition through oration. As a teacher with style. Teachers took great pride in being inspiring lecturers. Now it's almost as if there's some conflict between stimulation and cognition. If you're eloquent it is because you are somehow superficial and if you're putting people to sleep it's 'cause you're heavy.

EDWIN NEWMAN

And of that, there is no danger.

If the audience will hold still for one minute, there is a question here directed to Dr. Berry. Dr. Berry, how can we in the United States learn from others more successful than we on how to deal with adult literacy?

DR. BERRY

The last time I made a statement on how we could learn something from people in another country, it happened to be the People's Republic of China. I spent the next three weeks explaining that I was a good American and believed in the quality of our education. So I guess I'd better not answer that question.

EDWIN NEWMAN

Thank you all.

International Panel

Dr. James Grant, President, Overseas Development Council

Mr. Aklilu Habte, Director, Education Department, The World Bank

Dr. Seth Spaulding, Department of International Education, University of Pittsburgh

Dr. Dorothy Strickland, President, International Reading Association

Moderator
David Bronheim, Assistant Administrator, Intergovernmental and International Affairs, Agency for International Development

MR. BRONHEIM

It is indeed a very great privilege for me to appear with such a distinguished and dedicated group of people. I would like to apologize—I am not a teacher, a scholar, or a linguist, not even a grammarian. So I am a little bit wary of my own eloquence on a subject of this importance. Basically, I envy those whose lives can be brightened by the laughter of the literary lunacy that often afflicts both government and business.

My job, however, is different. My job is to think and worry about a problem from which there is no laughter coming and no festive air. I carry with me a vision of hundreds of millions of people who cannot read or write. Who may fail, even by their own standards, regardless of how hard they work and how hard they try.

And the vision is bad enough when you think of them as adults, but I am haunted by the millions of children who will not read or write in the coming years. Not just in the few years ahead, but in all of our forecasts going out to the end of the decade, hundreds of millions of people will still be without the ability to read or write when the century ends.

Those of us who are in the development business, if you will, worry about whether we can change this, worry about how the development process is affected by it, how you decide where limited resources of

money and people are spent, what mix of things provide literacy—the mix of jobs, rural development, housing, education, and population. And we carry this as a very heavy burden.

I could sit here and cite impressive statistics about what my agency does in the development business with the hundreds of millions of dollars that are being spent on education—the numbers of people, the institutions that we work with—but I would rather remind you of that mysterious magic that transforms a child when he learns to read and write. The light that occurs when the limited borders of his knowledge fall away and open vast new areas of learning and pleasure.

I cannot accept the notion that hundreds of millions of people will continue to be deprived of this opportunity in the years ahead. I know you don't accept it and I can assure you that your government does not. Somehow all of us must find a way to change the dismal forecast that sentences millions of other human beings to more generations of intellectual darkness. We from the most powerful country in the world cannot commit ourselves to less. Perhaps today's session, my fellow panelists, will help in finding solutions to this problem.

I guess we should go down the table in order, so I will call on Jim Grant first.

MR. GRANT

In 1948 the United Nations first spoke of education as one of the human rights. Using literacy as a rough surrogate for education, what progress has been achieved over the past three decades, and what are the prospects for progress toward universal literacy by the end of this century?

The past 30 years have witnessed unprecedented improvements in material well-being, including literacy. A smaller proportion of the world is illiterate—and hungry—than ever before. Literacy in India has increased from 24 to 36 percent between 1960 and 1974; world literacy now stands at 62 percent. But we should not take too much satisfaction from these indications of progress. While the percentages have decreased as a proportion of the world's growing population, the absolute numbers of those illiterate, hungry, and malnourished have increased. Omitting China, the number of illiterates has increased from 500 million to some 800 million in the mid 1970s, and the World Bank projects that illiteracy will increase to some 865 million by 1985. Even assuming that literacy in China has risen significantly to, say, 60 percent, the world right now has approximately 1 billion people who do not have the essential basic skill to read and write!

As we all know, literacy is not just a problem in developing countries. There is growing concern about the extent of functional illiteracy in the United States. But our principal concern this afternoon—on International Literacy Day—is with the increasing numbers in the developing countries who lack the basic capabilities to participate in the benefits of economic progress.

World Literacy Statistics for 1978 and 2000 (est.)
Table 1

Region	Weighted Literacy	Adults	1978 Pop.	2000 Pop.	Current Illiterates	Year 2000 Illiterates
	(%)	(%)				
Africa	23.7	56	436	813	186.3	347.4
Asia	52.1	62	2,433	3,656	722.6	1,065.8
Latin Am.	72.1	58	344	606	55.5	97.7
Europe	97.2	76	480	538	10.2	11.4
World	62.5	64	4,219	6,233	1,012.6	1,495.9

Proposals for Reversing This Trend

Will this upward trend toward even larger numbers of illiterate, hungry and malnourished people be decisively reversed in the near future? Projection of past trends would lead to the conclusion "no." But two recent circumstances hold out the prospect of a reversal, possibly even a dramatic reversal, of past trends.

The first of these is reflected in this year's foreign aid act. The Congress of the United States has included a new provision which says, in part:

> . . . the Congress, recognizing the desirability of overcoming the worst aspects of absolute poverty by the end of this century by among other things . . . increasing literacy . . . , encourages the President to explore with other countries, through all appropriate channels, the feasibility of a worldwide cooperative effort to overcome the worst aspects of absolute poverty and to assure self-reliant growth in the developing countries by the year 2000.

This concept of seeking to overcome the worst aspects of absolute poverty—of which illiteracy is one manifestation—within a given time frame is receiving increasingly serious consideration. The idea of encouraging international efforts to meet the world's literacy needs within a relatively short period of time, as an integral part of a more comprehensive effort, surfaced toward the end of 1976 in a major report prepared under the direction of Jan Tinbergen for the Club of Rome entitled *Reshaping the International Order* (RIO). The RIO report set minimum national end-of-the-century targets for such fundamental social characteristics as life expectancy, infant mortality, literacy and birth rates. The literacy target was 75 percent as a year 2000 "floor" for each country.

The time target was also endorsed by the Amsterdam Symposium on Food and Basic Needs earlier this year. The Amsterdam Declaration calls for increased development cooperation aimed at doubling food production and per capita income, and halving the present disparities between the most industrialized nations and the poorer countries on several key social indicators, such as literacy, by the end of the century.

This concept of halving the disparities would mean an increase, for example, in India's literacy rate from its present 34 percent to approximately 67 percent by the year 2000. India's illiteracy would be reduced by about 3½ percent annually. Expressed differently, this 3½ percent is the rate of reduction in the disparity separating India's present performance and the best possible performance of any country, which is zero illiteracy. This disparity reduction rate, or DRR, is a useful tool for assessing a country's performance over time.

Thus the Amsterdam Declaration goals could act as a set of targets for all countries in their literacy efforts. If every country in the world were to achieve the 3½ percent rate in reducing its illiteracy, and thereby meet the target of the Amsterdam Declaration, then the *world* literacy rate would *climb* from *62* percent to *81* percent and the present literacy rate in the developing countries of *47.3* percent would rise dramatically to *73.2* percent. Such an effort would reduce the absolute number of illiterates in the world from the present level of over 1 billion to about 850 million. Attainment of the 75 percent "floor" suggested in the RIO report would reduce the number still further, to about 765 million illiterates, even though the number of adults will have increased to 4 billion by the year 2000 from 2.7 billion today.

Literacy Under Different Scenarios
Table 2

Region	Weighted Literacy	Amsterdam Target	RIO Target	Together
World				
1978	62.5	78.6	80.2	80.8
2000	57.2			
LDCs				
1978	47.3			
2000	46.5	73.2	75.5	76.0

The Absolute Number of Illiterates in The World (millions)—Table 3

Region	No. of Illiterates	Year 2000 Amsterdam Target	Year 2000 RIO Target	Together
World				
1978	1,012.6	853.7	789.8	765.9
2000	1,707.3			
LDCs				
2000	1,675	839.1	767.1	751.5

Clearly the goal of "breaking the back of illiteracy" by the end of the century deserves increased international support. But are these goals feasible? Can individual countries really attain the necessary level of performance?

How Feasible Are These Year 2000 Goals?

Although good historical statistics are scarce for most developing countries, it is clear that illiteracy can greatly improve only as an integral part of a broader development effort. Equally clear is that several countries have achieved quite rapid rates of progress despite the slow progress in most poor countries. But can these achievements be duplicated?

The World Bank Report cited earlier notes that literacy in the low-income countries has climbed from 10 to 23 percent between 1960 and 1974, reducing illiteracy and the gap with the most advanced countries by 1.2 percent annually—a DRR of 1.2 percent. Literacy in the middle-income countries has climbed much more slowly, from 61 to 63 percent, for a reduction in illiteracy of just .4 percent annually.

Low-income countries as a group will need, therefore, to more than double rates at which they are reducing illiteracy, from a DRR of 1.4 percent to 3½ percent, and most will need to reduce their number of illiterates even faster if they are to reach the RIO goal of fewer than 25 percent illiterates. India, for example, with a literacy rate of 34 percent today, would need to reduce the number of its illiterates by 4.3 percent annually, a DRR of 4.3 percent, to raise its literacy rate to the RIO "floor" of 75 percent. Its DRR for the past 15 years has been only 1.1 percent. Guinea-Bissau, with the worst literacy rate in the world of 1 percent, would require a DRR of 6.1 percent over the next 22 years to achieve a literacy rate of 75.

It is noteworthy that some countries have reduced their illiteracy at rates of more than 5.0 percent annually for 10 years and more. Between 1960 and 1974, South Korea reduced its illiteracy at a rate of 8.2 percent and Hong Kong at 6.9 percent; Taiwan at 6.1 percent, Tanzania at 5.2 percent and Singapore at 5 percent. Tanzania, with its intensive adult and primary education program, *may* have achieved an *unprecedented* 10 percent annual reduction in its illiterates since 1967.

In all of these countries the above-average rates of progress in advancing literacy were paralleled by high rates of progress in improving the overall wellbeing of their poor majority—as measured by increases in life expectancy and infant mortality—that were well above the average for other countries in their income class. The following two case histories of Sri Lanka and Taiwan illustrate somewhat different patterns of good progress in literacy, as well as how sustained, major advances in literacy are achieved only in association with comprehensive progress which makes literacy functional for the majority of the population.

Two Case Histories

Sri Lanka, a poor country even by Asian standards, has had a long commitment to the belief that education is essential to development progress. Between 1946 and 1971 literacy increased from 57.8 percent to 78.1 percent, a disparity reduction rate of 2.5 percent annually. Sri Lanka has statistics going back to the late 19th century:

Taiwan in the post revolutionary period faced a tremendous task of social modernization. Between 1946 and 1976, literacy rose from 45 percent to 88 percent. As the following chart shows, progress in literacy was an integral part of a comprehensive development experience in which Taiwan progressed rapidly on other fronts as well.

Development Statistics for Sri Lanka—Table 4

	Literacy (%) literate	Ann. DRR	Life Expectancy at Age 1 (Yrs.)	Ann. DRR	Infant Mortality (/1,000) births	Ann. DRR	PQLI* Index Number	Ann. DRR	Per Capita GNP Growth Rate
1881	17.4	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1891	21.7	0.5%	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1901	26.4	0.6%	—	—	170	—	—	—	—
1911	31.0	0.6%	—	—	218	2.6%	—	—	—
1921	39.9	1.4%	37.9	—	192	1.3%	18.9	—	—
1946	57.8	1.4%	48.5	1.3%	141	1.3%	41.5	1.3%	—
1953	65.4	2.8%	60.0	7.1%	71	10.0%	64.3	6.8%	—
1963	71.6	2.0%	64.8	3.3%	56	2.6%	72.8	2.7%	0.3
1971	78.1	3.2%	67.4	3.0%	43	3.8%	79.0	3.2%	1.6
1921–71	—	2.0%	—	2.8%	—	3.2%	—	2.7%	—

Source: Based on data from Population Problems of Sri Lanka (Colombo, Sri Lanka: Demographic Training and Research Institute, 1976).

Development Statistics for Taiwan—Table 5

	Literacy (%) literate	Ann. DRR	Life Expectancy at Age 1 (Yrs.)	Ann. DRR	Infant Mortality (/1,000) births	Ann. DRR	PQLI* Index Number	Ann. DRR	Per Capita GNP Growth Rate%
Hist.*	45.0	—	49.9	—	155.4	—	35	—	—
1950	56.0	5.4%	55.6	1.9%	35.2	8.4%	62.8	—	—
1955	62.1	2.9%	64.4	10.1%	44.8	−6.0%	70.9	4.8%	3.0
1960	72.9	6.5%	65.7	2.2%	35.0	5.8%	77.1	4.7%	3.5
1965	76.9	3.1%	67.9	4.2%	24.1	9.4%	81.9	4.6%	6.5
1970	85.3	8.6%	68.8	2.1%	16.9	10.4%	86.6	5.8%	4.8
1976	87.9	3.2%	71.0	5.1%	10.1	20.7%	90.4	5.4%	5.0
Hist. to 1976	—	4.9%	—	3.8%	—	8.2%	—	5.1%	4.0

*The historical figures are from various years: life expectancy at age 1—1836, infant mortality—1831, and literacy—1946.

*The Physical Quality of Life Index (PQLI) is an equally weighted composite index on the scale of 0–100 based on life expectancy at age 1, infant mortality and literacy.

India's Massive Proposed Program

What are the prospects in India, which has the largest number of illiterates in the world, and where nearly two-thirds of the population cannot read or write? This is the second major recent hopeful development. The news is so dramatic that many may not take it seriously: On October 2nd, Gandhi's birthday, the Indian Government is launching its Revised Minimum Needs Program, which calls over the next ten years for school attendance for all children ages 6–14 and for a reduction in illiteracy by 100 million. Most of the adult literacy effort is targeted for the next 5 years at a cost of over $200 million, a more than tenfold increase. It will not be easy, since the literacy effort, to be successful, will need to be associated with other major programs which are both difficult to achieve and even more costly. This effort is designed to cover all adults aged 15–35 and to reach the rural communities, and includes mobilizing the educated but unemployed and retired persons. Achievement of the target in 10 years would require reducing the number of illiterates by a virtually unprecedented 10 percent annually.

If this program were to achieve its target within the next 20 rather than 10 years, India would still achieve a literacy rate above 75 percent before the end of the century. This would enable India to meet both the "halving of the disparity" Amsterdam Declaration target of 67 percent and the RIO "floor" of 75 percent in DRR. Moreover, achievement of this goal even by the end of the century would require a disparity reduction rate of approximately 5 percent annually and an effort on a scale unprecedented in history, except possibly for China.

Conclusion

This brief survey of the historical experience of selected countries in improving literacy suggests that most developing countries will need to increase their education efforts tremendously if they are to halve their illiteracy rates by the year 2000. It also suggests that this goal, while difficult, is not impossible to attain, if there is the will to do so at both national and international decision-making levels. For countries with the lowest literacy ratings, an illiteracy reduction rate of 4 to 6 percent or better will be required to attain the RIO "floor" targets. This will be even more difficult, but, empirical experience suggests, still not impossible.

These examples suggest that with sufficient international and national attention to measures such as literacy, significant progress can be achieved—but it will not be easy.

The Indian experiment in particular would appear to warrant increased international attention. On the basis of the historical record, India's prospects for success in achieving its literacy goals appear most unlikely. But so did its prospects for reaching the goal of doubling wheat production in 6 years set in the late 1960s—an unprecedented goal which, with international cooperation, was achieved in five years rather than six. Success in this equally unprecedented functional literacy effort should have many ancillary benefits—including increased production, reduced human fertility and the improved functioning of the political system.

Doesn't this Indian program deserve more attention than it has received to date? Or is it that most assume it will be largely a paper effort? Isn't this the type of effort contemplated by the Congress in its encouragement of President Carter to explore the feasibility of year 2000 goals? Don't we all have a stake in its success? What might Americans and others do to help it succeed?

Wouldn't a more substantial development cooperation effort be of major assistance for the overall progress required to accompany a successful functional education effort? At the least, wouldn't increased international attention to the virtually unprecedented scale and vision of the new Indian effort encourage both its supporters in India and those elsewhere seeking similar acceleration in progress toward achieving universal access to meaningful education? Even though universal literacy is not feasible by the year 2000, doesn't the record of an important group of countries, and the plans of India, hold out

the prospect of overcoming the worst aspects of illiteracy by the end of this century through increased national efforts supported by increased international cooperation?

Thank you.

MR. BRONHEIM

Well, I guess that gives us our first four questions. Mr. Aklilu.

MR. AKLILU

The problem that we are discussing today is a very serious international phenomenon which has engaged, and continues to engage, the attention and the efforts of governments, agencies, and educators. If this problem is to be tackled seriously, a better understanding of the breadth of the problem, delivery models, development strategies and the financial situation is required in each country and/or region.

In many of the developing countries this is the subject of big international conferences, sweeping resolutions and recommendations. But perhaps little follow-up—much heat, little or no light. Today, September 8, 1978, as we are phasing into the 21st century, there are over 800 million fellow human beings who do not read and write—who are illiterate.

- The major issue, however, is not only that they are illiterate, but also that they are usually starving, disease-ridden, condemned to live in squalor, excessively dependent on others, and at the bottom of the social strata.
- In fact, they do not live their life as they are potentially capable of living it—they live the life authored by the "few," usually educated or economically well-off, in possession of political authority.
- The problem of illiteracy is not only illiteracy, it is illiteracy plus.
- Anyone concerned with the issue of literacy in developing countries knows that he or she is concerned with a multitude of inter-related and complex issues—requiring ingenuity, indefatigability, resourcefulness, generosity and sagacity.

Now it is quite interesting to talk about illiteracy in a country like the United States, and to talk about illiteracy in some of the developing societies—Africa, Southeast Asia, some of Latin America. The difference is fantastic. We are not talking about situations where schools exist, where everyone has a chance to go to school but somehow doesn't learn. We are not talking about situations where teachers are available. We are not talking about situations where the increase in population is somehow under control. We are talking about two different areas. And yet in the end both produce individuals who are not functional within their societies, or who could be made more functional.

In most cases, the literacy issue in developing countries is automatically associated with the poor segments of the population. Moreover, we must recognize priority target groups within that population, specifically:

- Women.
- The landless rural population.
- The urban poor.
- Segments of the population discriminated against on the bases of religion, ethnicity, etc.

If we are to reach these groups, we must further the work of the schools, which remain our primary weapons in the fight against illiteracy. Schools in developing countries must be equipped and encouraged to:

- Improve their delivery.
- Reach the unreached.
- Contribute to non-formal activities which complement and supplement formal schooling.

In the process of contributing towards the eradication of illiteracy, or better still, to the transformation of the economic, political and social conditions surrounding illiteracy, a number of issues and policy options need to be clarified and elucidated:

(i) Creating broad national, regional and local development plans and strategies is essential. Central to this plan would have to be "human resources development"—literacy as part and parcel of the total educational program of a country, not as an isolated phenomenon. Literacy should be viewed as an investment to help people master their destinies, to make people part-

ners in society.

(ii) The conceptual base needs to be broadened. Literacy is not only reading the word, but reading the world.

(iii) If grass-roots local participation is desired, the issue of the language of instruction will have to be faced. Conflicting demands among advocates of instruction in the mother tongue, the national tongue, or an international language must be resolved. In most of the developing countries, this question of language is central. If you are interested in the literacy of the majority, you will have to think in terms of making them literate in their language. Or languages.

(iv) Genuine commitment and resolve must be mobilized at two political levels: (a) Sustained governmental involvement; (b) Local initiative, drive, and participation. People have to develop themselves. For this to take place, local initiative is essential.

(v) Decisions must be made in regard to developing local material versus regional and international teaching material production. We need to look more seriously into how we can help people develop teaching materials in their own language.

(vi) The place and role of local research and evaluation versus international research and evaluation must be determined. When we talk about research and evaluation, we are too often saying that we will do research for you about you. We need to help build local capabilities, weak as they might be at the initial stage. It is an essential component of any educational drive to learn from our past experience.

(vii) We must recognize that literacy is the responsibility of the nation and its citizens—not the sole province of one ministry. The drive for literacy requires the development of coordinating mechanisms, the mobilization of local resources, and the presence of dynamic leadership which can capitalize on the energies and resources of all ministries, as well as private and other voluntary agencies. National resources must be pooled if developing countries are to receive maximum benefit from them.

It is hard to generalize about possibilities for assistance by agencies and individuals, since situations and conditions vary from country to country, from one culture to another, from one stage of development to the other, as well as from one leadership to another. It would seem, however, that the following might be useful areas for assistance and international cooperation:

(i) Developing literacy strategies; improving and sensitizing the climate for basic education; fostering continual dialogue, orientation, and discussion.

(ii) Developing teaching/learning materials.

(iii) Research and evaluation, especially building local institutions with the capability to undertake research and evaluation.

(iv) Language policy development.

(v) Developing local/rural publishing houses, as well as a rural press, to support literacy and post-literacy programs; support for the development of modest libraries, etc.

We have argued literacy to be an aspect of any country's total educational development and an aspect of any national development strategy. One may ask the brutal question: Why literacy? Why worry about it? Different people may have different answers. I would say:

For the individual: It broadens and enriches his stock of knowledge and provides him with alternative possibilities. It makes him a free person.

For the community: It enables him to be a productive member rather than a parasitic member of the community and the nation.

For the broader human community: It enables man to actualize his "humanness," both as an active participant in shaping his own life, and as a contributor to the improvement of human life around the world. Man becomes human, or at least more human.

Any contribution that anyone makes in this field is therefore a contribution in some measure to the development of a free, democratic, livable and humane society amongst the community of nations.

Thank you.

MR. BRONHEIM

Now to Dr. Strickland.

DR. STRICKLAND

Thank you very much, Mr. Bronheim.

The International Reading Association is an organization of 70,000 individuals and institutions dedicated to the improvement of reading instruction and the promotion of lifetime reading habits.

In its role as a forum for ideas, the IRA invites a wide variety of opinions on numerous topics related to the field of reading. For that reason, it is no easy task to select two or three issues that would reflect the concerns of a large proportion of the membership.

Nevertheless, I have selected three areas of importance that I feel worthy of consideration by those in international policymaking positions. These relate to:

- the impact of language learning research on classroom practices;
- the present state and trends of pre-first grade education;
- and the promotion of lifelong reading.

During August, the IRA held its Seventh World Congress on Reading in Hamburg in the Republic of West Germany. It attracted nearly 1,000 participants from 24 different nations around the world.

One of the overriding concerns of the researchers present at that meeting was the need to view reading as one part of a total language learning process and to view literacy as communication. Thus listening, speaking, reading, and writing would be treated as various aspects of a total language learning process which makes it possible for individuals and groups to communicate with one another. During the past twenty years, new research in the area of language and learning has caused many professionals in the field of reading to question certain school practices involving instruction and the evaluation of student progress. To help bridge the gap between research results and classroom practices, international and national organizations could:

(1) Promote opportunities for researchers and professional educators from around the world to synthesize recent research evidence with earlier findings and examine the implications for classroom practices.

(2) Follow-up by providing the means for technical assistance and the sharing of information among developing and developed nations.

My second point has to do with preventive approaches to illiteracy. It focuses on the need for greater emphasis on educational programs for the very young and their families. Where education for the early years exists, it not only acts as an educational program, but also serves as a means of dispensing health and welfare services and providing parent education. Such programs have enormous potential for upgrading family and community life and for preventing learning failure. As Mr. Aklilu just noted, illiteracy cannot be thought of simply in terms of the school and the academic world; it needs to be considered in terms of the entire society and its needs. International and national policymaking bodies can assist by:

(1) supporting educational involvement during the early years through policymaking decisions.

(2) collecting and disseminating information about a variety of approaches to early education which—

a. have worked in various types of countries with differing needs and lifestyles,

b. are low in cost,

c. and may serve, not as models, but as general information for use in adapting to local needs.

(3) recognizing and supporting ways to promote the important contribution parents can make in the education of their children.

Third, there is much that can be done within and among countries to promote reading as a lifelong habit. The problem of encouraging reading for information and recreation on the part of those who can read but don't is one that exists in both developing and developed nations. International and national groups can help by:

(1) Supporting and conducting readership campaigns.

(2) Working to offset social pressures which deter literacy development in order to maintain the economic and social status quo. It is not by accident that we have

seen a relative lack of progress in combatting illiteracy among women, the rural poor, the urban poor, and minorities in all countries.

Finally, much has been said today about the problems of illiteracy in the United States and throughout the world. Indeed, there is much to be done.

But much has already been done. There is a body of carefully controlled research which indicates that today's students in the United States generally read as well as, if not better than, their counterparts thirty years ago. Internationally we have made impressive strides as well.

I would urge everyone in this room to continue to strive for universal literacy. My only hope is that, in that effort, you will be as diligent in alerting the public to our educational successes as you are at keeping them abreast of our failures. Thank you.

MR. BRONHEIM

Dr. Spaulding.

DR. SPAULDING

Current estimates are that there are about 800 million illiterate adults throughout the world. The absolute numbers are increasing, even though there is a gradual reduction in percentages of illiterates in most countries. Despite a sizable investment in national literacy programs and campaigns in most countries, no simple and rapid solution to the literacy problem has been found.

I recently returned from Afghanistan, where I was trying to work out assistance that the government needs to mount a huge literacy campaign in a country of sixteen or seventeen million people—where eighty-five percent of the population is illiterate. Even in Kabul, the capital, seventy percent of the men and ninety percent of the women are illiterate. In rural areas, eighty-five percent of the men and ninety-nine percent of the women are illiterate. They want to do something about it.

Well, when you get to a rural village in Afghanistan, you realize that no matter how many classes you open up for adults, you still haven't changed the very conservative pattern of keeping the Moslem women at home. And you're not going to change that overnight. You're not going to change the old traditions of doing business in the village overnight, so that adults feel the need for literacy. And the ministry of education, even with a long-term program, cannot do it alone.

Illiteracy is both caused by and is a symptom of the economic and social problems of a country. No literacy campaign will be successful in a village, for instance, where there is virtually 100 percent illiteracy, where the local language is one not used nationally, where there are no newspapers, magazines, books, or other printed materials, and where all social and economic functions are (and have been for centuries) carried out in the oral tradition. If, on the other hand, the government has a coherent and long-term development policy designed to introduce reading materials in local languages, technologies appropriate to the improvement of local economic productivity, capital for the creation of new economic activity, infrastructure (electricity, roads, mass communication, etc.) necessary for bringing the village into the modern sector, and formal and non-formal education activities designed to prepare the villagers for change, then literacy activities will have a chance of success.

Economists have only recently begun to emphasize the basic-needs approach to development. Until recently, development strategies have stressed the creation of capital-intensive, high-technology industry in urban areas. This presumably would have a "trickle-down" effect, ultimately benefiting the masses. In most countries, this approach has benefited some in the urban sectors, but little has trickled down to the rural areas (over 80 percent of the population in the poorest countries). In many cases, even the urban areas have become blighted with slums, made up of rural migrants attracted to the city where sufficient jobs for unskilled workers do not exist.

The current thrust is on development policies which stress income distribution, appropriate technologies for the encouragement of traditional and rural economic activities, and the creation of social and

economic infrastructure and services which will benefit *all* the people. This approach does not assume that the task is one of social-welfare programs for the disadvantaged; rather, the task is assumed to be one of creating the policies and programs which will help stimulate a broad growth of the economy where the people are, and in which all the people can participate effectively.

Now you see, with that kind of development policy the situation changes. I spent some time a few summers ago with nomads in Saudi Arabia, trying to figure out how you might make nomads literate. You have to change their total socio-economic way of going about things. It is not a question of offering them literacy classes. But if you have other programs—in the case of nomads, settlement programs, health programs, education programs, subsidy programs, forage for animal programs, and so on—you may have a chance to change the lifestyle of the nomad, if that's what you want to do. I'm not suggesting that necessarily it should be changed, although the nomads, as far as we can tell, are not very happy with their present way of life.

In this context, literacy and adult-education programs take on new significance. Literacy skills acquire a functionality which has meaning to adults. Linked to other skills training and extension activities, literacy skills become something of perceived value to the community.

The basic-needs approach to development is becoming an integral part of strategies adopted by the World Bank, the United Nations Development Program, and the various multilateral agencies within the UN system (UNESCO, ILO, WHO, FAO, UNICO, etc.). Similarly, AID is more and more adopting the basic-needs approach, as are the many non-profit, voluntary organizations in the U.S. involved in development and education activities in other countries. World Education, Inc., for instance, an outgrowth of Welthy Fisher's work, specializes in helping countries design adult education and literacy activities based on a careful analysis of the basic needs of the people and direct involvement of the participants in the design and management of adult-education efforts.

What can the U.S. do to more effectively contribute to literacy and adult-education efforts internationally?

From an operational point of view, we must view literacy programs as more than literacy classes. We must encourage literacy infrastructure projects—in essence, activities designed to help countries create simple reading materials for adults which relate to the needs and interests of their communities: publishing infrastructures designed to encourage the creation of local authors, marketing and distribution facilities to get good published materials to the people, and newspaper and magazine publishing designed to link to the development efforts of the country.

We must encourage the concept of life-long education through the inclusion of adult and non-formal education activities in all development efforts. In educational planning efforts, we must encourage governments to examine the integration of education efforts undertaken under various ministries, including health, agriculture, industry, labor, and others. School buildings should be designed to permit their use as community centers, where literacy classes, agricultural extension, cooperative education, and other life-long education activities can be held.

Within Ministries of Education, programs should be encouraged which link schools to integrated rural-development programs, with curricula modified to include practical material of immediate use to children at all levels—whether they continue beyond that level or not. Too often developing countries rate the quality of their educational efforts through questions like, "Do we have an educational system that gets kids to the university?" Most of these countries cannot get afford primary schools—village schools to the fourth-year level. They should really be concentrating on getting a four-year education system that relates to village needs for all children. Yet in Afghanistan, for example, with an eighty-five percent illiteracy rate, there are six thousand unemployed high school graduates, because in the past they have concentrated too much on high school education, and not enough on primary education.

Illiteracy is, in effect, both a symptom of underdevelopment and a constraint to development. Literacy efforts must be a priority concern in our bilateral and multilateral involvement in development-assistance efforts. But overnight solutions to illiteracy problems are not at hand. Long-term efforts, consistently supported and carefully integrated with other basic-needs strategies, are needed.

Without such efforts, hundreds of millions of adults throughout the world will continue to be denied the basic skills necessary for self-realization; in essence, they will continue to be denied a basic human right which affects their potential to benefit from all other human rights. The United States, in exercising human-rights leadership, must place a concern for literacy and the basic needs of all people high on the list of its international priorities.

DISCUSSION

EDWIN NEWMAN

We speak of India quite often in the context of foreign aid. I think we all assume a bit too easily that United States foreign aid has some correlation with progress for the poorer citizen of India or any other recipient country. The question I wish to put before you reads, "Look at India and China. Fifty years ago, they were equally miserable, but until recently nothing had gone to China from the U.S., while hundreds of millions have gone to India. Yet today, China's nine hundred million citizens have pulled themselves up by their bootstraps and have practically achieved self-reliance, while India and its six hundred million people continue to flounder in many areas, including nutrition, population, and literacy. India is a mess," the question says, "and United States aid seems to have made them involuntary parasites on us, causing them to neglect their very own, very great resources. We just don't know very much about helping developing countries help themselves. India shows this." Please comment.

MR. SPAULDING

There is no question but that China, on the basic needs front, has made unprecedented progress. There was a rather expensive prelude to it—a twenty-year civil war—which led to the national will and conviction to do this. But the tendency is to think the Indians have done much worse than they have. We don't have reliable estimates on literacy in China, but if I were to ask the group here, "Which country has had the greatest increase in food production since 1950, India or China? Which country has had the greatest increase in food production since 1960? Which country has had the greatest increase in food production of those two since 1970?" My guess is that ninety-five percent of the people in this room would say China.

In every case the answer is India. The Indians have had a better percentage record than the Chinese. If you look ahead to

the next 15 years, virtually all the responsible estimates indicate that India will do significantly better, percentage-wise, in increasing its food production than China.

China has done better at working out a distribution system of great quality, although that distribution system came as a consequence of a very great expense. And very clearly, the Congress has mandated that our foreign aid effort be more concerned with meeting basic needs to try to get at this deficiency in our progress. In this connection the new Foreign Aid Statute is particularly relevant—the charge by the Congress to the President to explore with other countries what it would take to overcome the worst aspects of poverty by the year 2000. In many cases it isn't a question of increasing production, but rather a question of distribution.

EDWIN NEWMAN

More than two-thirds of the world's illiterates are women, the vast majority of whom reside in the developing world. What special efforts and/or projects are in progress to raise the school enrollments for girls and women, and otherwise to increase the number of literate females by non-formal means?

MR. GRANT

Many things are being done. The first is realizing what has not been done in the past. During the 1950's, in many of our developing countries the question was not even raised. Today, we are raising it.

Now, in the organization from which I come, we have appointed a professional who screens every project, to make sure that this question is looked at—in fact, who has direct instruction to make the question of equity central in whatever we do. The women/men issue in looked at very critically, and there is no project we do where this question is not raised.

DR. SPAULDING

Strangely enough, in the last two weeks I have been helping the Afghan government develop a plan for five multipurpose schools that will run a morning shift exclusively for girl drop-outs. In Afghanistan, a very conservative Moslem country, adults have tended to allow their female children to go to one or two grades of school, after which they can pull them back into the family and not allow them to go further.

Well, the will, as Aklilu says, is important. The present policy of the national government is not to allow this; girls and women must be brought into the mainstream. Consequently, they're building special schools, at which the morning shift will be exclusively for girls who have dropped out of schools at any level. The afternoon will be devoted to vocational training for boys who have been pushed out at the eighth grade. And the evening sessions will be for community center activities which will also stress bringing women back in for arts and crafts, general education, and so on. This is simply an example of things that are happening in many countries, but it's fresh in my mind, since I was recently working there.

MR. BRONHEIM

I want to say two things, one strictly as a government official and then another which strikes me as an individual, because it has a certain air of irony to it. It is quite clear to me that the United States government, in all of its programs, is determined to remedy what appear to have been defects in the way we thought about the women's role in development. And moreover, at every opportunity, as we work with other governments, international institutions, and financing institutions, we are driving this point home. The momentum in the whole development effort is enormous, and it is taken into account in everything we do. Now, how quickly that begins to show effect is very difficult to measure.

But I note that in two areas we have strong and opposing value judgments. We, the people who have learned over the last fifteen years to oppose intervening in other peoples' domestic affairs, feel quite strongly about two most delicate areas: one, basic needs, which go to the heart of the way wealth and income is distributed in another society; and two, the role of women. And

it is interesting to me, and almost ironic, to see individuals with great sensitivity to the notion that you must not meddle too deeply in other peoples' internal affairs, determined to let nothing stand in the way of our pushing these two areas.

DR. STRICKLAND

I might add one comment. In some of the early childhood programs that I know about, in developing nations particularly, there are opportunities for mothers to participate in literacy programs, the motivation being that they can better help their children and take care of the needs of the family, in terms of health and nutrition, if they are literate.

EDWIN NEWMAN

How can knowledge about developing literacy and teaching reading be shared across national boundaries without disrupting the receiving culture?

MR. GRANT

I'll make a quick stab at that. It seems to me that certain processing needs are not particularly culturally biased. For instance, Aklilu was saying that there has to be some kind of local capacity for research and evaluation so that you can start learning things—you must do linguistic studies to find out what language groups are present. And you need evaluation studies to find out where your literacy program is breaking down, and so on.

You may do this in different ways in different countries, but each country needs to have this kind of a process somewhere in its system if it's going to improve its work. You're going to have some kind of publishing and distribution system if you're going to get reading materials to rural areas. You may not be able to use the sales system that you use on newstands in this country, but you find out how local products are distributed in the developing country, and then tie your distribution system to what traditional distribution systems are in the country.

Moreover, you have got to find out how people learn, and what makes drop-outs drop out, and what gets people involved. These things are part of a development strategy, and a literacy strategy, and an educational strategy, and countries have done them in their own ways all over the world. So I think we can all learn from one another without trying to impose a culture or a foreign influence on a country, developing instead the local capabilities in each country.

DR. STRICKLAND

As a member of an organization devoted to this topic, I would say that it not only can be done, but it is being done. I think we've learned a lot, in terms of attitudes, about how one goes into a country, having been invited into that country to assist or to get information. Developed countries can indeed learn from developing nations—this is a two-way street.

And developing nations need to develop their own strategies. They may need technical assistance, but essentially it is their program they are developing, and their problems that they are addressing. The outsiders who come in are indeed that—they can be helpful, but their attitudes, I think, largely determine how useful they can be. Certainly, their attitudes as much as their knowledge will determine how useful they will be.

EDWIN NEWMAN

I'd like to thank you all very much.

Closing Remarks

Dr. Joseph Duffey
Chairman, National Endowment for the Humanities

DR. DUFFEY

I am honored to share in this meeting with those of you who are making contributions to the work of literacy education here in the United States and around the world. The ability to communicate, to understand and be understood, to use language to capture a conviction, express an emotion, or clarify a concept is the most fundamental of human skills.

It is not inappropriate that a representative of the National Endowment for the Humanities should participate in these deliberations. We define the humanities today in terms of certain fields of knowledge—history, philosophy, the study of language and culture. In the Middle Ages, however, the university curriculum in Western Europe was divided into several categories of knowledge, and the term humanities referred specifically to those disciplines and skills related to human expression: grammar, logic and rhetoric. The term comes from a Latin term "humanitas," which means the mental cultivation befitting a man or woman—the human arts.

For citizens of the United States, literacy also has a political significance. One of our Founding Fathers, Thomas Jefferson, two hundred years ago wrote, "democracy demands an educated citizenry." He envisioned a community in which access to knowledge would be a right for all citizens rather than a privilege accorded to only a few. Extraordinary social, technological and demographic changes separate Jefferson's world from ours, but nothing has happened to loosen the bonds between literacy and democracy. Indeed, that tie today is as critical as it ever was.

It is a significant and, I believe, a hopeful sign that we have acknowledged in the context of this conference that the task of providing the tools of basic literacy for all our citizens is still unfinished here in the United States as well as being a problem with international dimensions.

It is also significant that we acknowledge that we are no longer in a situation where a so-called "developed" world will relate to the so-called "under-developed" world simply as mentor to teacher. For today we in the United States have much to learn from the remarkable strides that have been made in literacy and basic education by our brothers and sisters in the less industrialized parts of the world. We look for inspiration and instruction from the remarkable experiments in citizen education in Britain and Guinea-Bissau and in the Peoples' Republic of China as well as to the work of scholars and teachers here in our own land. And today we learn from the voice of philosophers of education like Paulo Freire as well as from our own John Dewey and the British philosopher, Whitehead.

We have come to see ourselves, then, as collaborators with those of other nations, large and small—collaborators in an unfinished task, students as well as teachers, learning as well as instructing.

Without mass literacy, neither modern technology nor modern nations could exist. Yet the idea of widespread literacy is still something of a historical novelty. As late as 1850 only about half of the adults in the advanced European countries could read, and as late as the nineteenth century, the social value of universal literacy was still a subject of debate. In 1746, for instance, the Academy of Rouen debated the following question: "Is it advantageous or harmful to have peasants who know how to read and write?" Two decades later, in his essay on *National Education*, the French Attorney General wrote that "Educators are pursuing a fatal policy. They are teaching people to read and write who should have learned only to draw and to handle planes and files. . . . The good of society demands that the knowledge of the people should not exceed what is necessary for their occupation. Every man who sees further than his dull daily round, will never follow it out bravely and patiently." And it 1807 the president of the British Royal Society was arguing that teaching the poor to read and write would "impair their morals and happiness. It would teach them to despise their lot in life. It would enable them to read seditious pamphlets and . . . books."

Here in the United States we live in a pluralistic nation where many of us look back upon grandfathers and great-grandfathers who fled from societies in which barriers of established privilege reduced opportunities for literacy and learning, and who came to settle a new nation in quest of such opportunities for all.

The quest for universal literacy is inextricably linked to certain values in the modern world: equality of social and economic opportunity; self-determination in the political sphere; and the development of the critical spirit in the realm of thought.

Many of your deliberations today have focused upon literacy in terms of "basic skills" and what we have come to call "functional literacy." I want, however, to say a few words about another kind of literacy. In addition to the level of literacy that we call "functional" or "basic," we must also keep in mind the concept of "social" literacy.

Perhaps this is not the best term for what I have in mind. I am not referring to the tasks of writing invitations to tea or of composing dissertations on urban problems. (Although there is nothing wrong with writing invitations or studying urban problems!) What I am trying to express here is the sense in which these skills and capacities provide us with the opportunity to become a part of society. And for those of us who live in various societies, to transcend our own national heritage and gain some sense of ourselves as citizens of the world.

All of us, even the simplest, humblest and most innocent, lead complex and often lonesome lives, lives that no one else sees. Some of the time no one else is even around, or everyone is too busy talking about something else. Or the important things that are happening, even when other people are around and interested, happen invisibly inside us.

This lonesomeness is a part of the human condition. We seek to overcome it in many ways. We sing, dance, and we draw pictures. But the most subtle, persuasive and all-encompassing way in which we get through to other people is with words. We talk and we listen.

Such activity is very important to the maintenance and expression of our humanity. When people are beside us or on the other end of a telephone wire, we feel less alone. We delight in talking to them and listening. But there are limitations to talking and listening. For one thing, there are many people with whom we will never have personal contact, and others who in the past spoke as you and I speak, but whose voices are not with us today.

It is said that dead men and women tell no tales, but that is not quite the whole truth. Thanks to literacy and thought and human expression, we have records from the past. We can learn from the great thinkers who have gone before us. And so, in addition to the important of "basic" and "functional" literacy, which is necessary for every man and woman to live an adequate life, there are requisites of what I am here calling "social" literacy. Beyond our ability to read the directions on a box of cake mix or the instructions that tell us how to use a plow are other opportunities that literacy provides. The opportunity to hear what other people have had on their minds in the past about the private and most human aspects of their lives. To hear that past, we have to read it—and by the same token, written expression allows us to insure that our children and our children's children may know what is on our minds about the inner and private and most human aspects of our own lives.

The purpose of literacy is to express and transmit more than technical information and insight.

Take the example of Nate Shaw, the former slave and tenant farmer who served a term in prison for participating in union organizing. Nate Shaw was discovered when he was 84 years old in Tuskegee, Alabama by Theodore Rosengarten. A few years ago, Rosengarten took down with a tape recorder Nate Shaw's remarkable memories and reflections upon his life. First the tape recording and then the book became a marvelous instrument for releasing what was locked up inside this man who was not able to read or write. His deep feelings of compassion, of a sense of justice, and an appreciation of life are expressed in remarkable passages from the book:

"I never tried to beat nobody out of nothin' since I've been in the world, never has, but I understands that there's a whole class of people tries to beat the other class of people out of what they has. I've had it put on me; I've seen it put on others with these eyes. Oh, it's plain! If every man thoroughly got his rights, there wouldn't be so many rich people in the world. I spied that a long time ago. Oh, it's desperately wrong! I found out all of that because they tried to take, I don't know what all, away from me."

"Somebody got to stand up. If I'm sworn to stand up for all the poor colored farmers and poor white farmers, if they take a notion to join, I've got to do it."

"If you don't like what I've done, then you are against the man I am today. I ain't going to take no backwater about it. If you don't like me for the way I have lived, go off into the woods and bushes and shut your mouth and let me go for what I'm worth and if I come out, don't let it worry you, this is me and for God's sake, don't come messin' with me. I'd fight this morning for my rights. I'd do it for other folks' rights if they'll push along."

"How many people is it today, that needs and requires to carry out this movement? How many is it know just what it's goin' to take? It's taken untold time and more time and it'll take more before it's finished . . . The unacknowledged ones . . . that's livin' here in this country, they're gonna win."*

Nate Shaw may have been illiterate, but his testimony was not lost, thanks to Theodore Rosengarten, and it reminds us to this day of how deep and sensitive and rich the human spirit can be.

It is estimated that there are 4 billion people in the world today. Every one of them has observations, reflections, emotions and intuitions on his or her mind. If we live today, as someone said, in a "global village," then getting to know what other people have on their minds, and to know and trust each other, and to sense our relationships with those whom we may never see but with whom we share a common globe, is of the utmost importance. To do this, every one of the 4 billion of us must learn something of what the other 399,999,999 have to say or feel. But this is a mind-boggling thought, for we cannot all speak to each other and we cannot possibly all listen to each other. Yet there can be writing; there can be the reading of messages transmitted in writing.

As diverse as are the many people that populate the earth today, at the level of our humanity, there are, I believe, not 4 billion messages to translate, but only one fundamental message, "What are we to make of the human experience?"

The expressions of that message are infinitely varied, overwhelmingly complex, unfathomably deep—which is to say they are human.

But there is only one message and the fact that it is one message is why Shakespeare plays so well in Tokyo and Rio and why the tale of Genji reads so well in Moscow and London—and why Sophocles and Euripides and Plato go over so well everywhere: in Harlem and Hunts Point, in Walla Walla and Kankakee, in Tobasco and Perth, in Mwanca, Omsk and Zaragoza.

You will note that I have slipped from talking about the theme of this conference which you have been so intensely and rightly concerned with today—basic skills and functional literacy—to a topic with which I am intensely and, I believe, rightly concerned. Perhaps I made the transition to avoid revealing the little I understand about what all of you know so well. But I did it also to try to illustrate a fundamental aspect of human literacy to which I referred at the beginning of these remarks.

There is an advertisement which is running lately in some of our American news-

*_All God's Dangers_, The life of Nate Shaw, ©. 1974 by Theodore Rosengarten, reprinted by permission of Alfred A. Knopf, Inc.

papers and magazines and on our subways and buses. It is an ad for the United Negro College Fund and it asks for contributions to those colleges. The ad has a picture of a young man sitting alone in a room with a single sentence. It says, "A mind is a terrible thing to waste."

I believe that ad poignantly expresses, for all 4 billion of those of us who inhabit the earth, an emerging and fundamental conviction—any one of our 4 billion minds is a terrible thing to waste—and that, from my point of view, is what the quest for universal literacy is all about.

Appendix A

united nations educational, scientific and cultural organization
organisation des nations unies pour l'éducation, la science et la culture

7, place de Fontenoy, 75700 Paris

The Director-General

Reference:

MESSAGE TO THE INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY CONFERENCE
WASHINGTON, 8 SEPTEMBER 1978

I take pleasure in sending my best wishes to the organizers of the Conference on Literacy which is being convened today at the State Department of the United States of America. I am particularly moved and pleased by the initiative and appreciate very much the high level and range of those domestic institutions connected with this event.

With 800 million illiterates in the world and the steady growth of this number in spite of all efforts, illiteracy continues to be one of the greatest scourges of our time. This state of affairs is in contradiction to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, Article 26 of which states the right of one and all to education. The consequences of illiteracy are many, but most significantly it stands in way of the development of the individual as well as that of society. Experience has shown that, if illiteracy is to be eradicated in a country, there must be the political will, the technical means and sufficient funds.

Unfortunately, the societies most afflicted by illiteracy are invariably the poorest and the least developed. Thus, even with the best will in the world, these societies cannot on their own provide the necessary solution. They will, however, welcome outside help, and the fight against illiteracy, more, perhaps, than any other effort, therefore demands the solidarity of mankind and calls for international co-operation.

With the experience, the technical means and the know-how at your disposal, the contribution of a country such as yours is indispensable to this action. In this regard I hope the youth of the United States can play a direct role in this action through the collection of funds in schools, colleges and universities to aid specific projects in favour of the most disadvantaged societies.

For its part, Unesco is ready to co-operate in this venture with the National Commission for Unesco, with the universities and the intellectual and artistic world in general, and with the information media of your great country.

Thirty years after the proclamation of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, we must intensify our joint efforts to ensure that every child, every young person and adult, without discrimination, fully enjoys the right to education, which responds to a fundamental need of man in society.

On behalf of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, I salute and thank you for your contribution to this world-wide task.

A.-M. M'Bow

Amadou-Mahtar M'Bow

Appendix B

THE SECRETARY OF HEALTH, EDUCATION, AND WELFARE
WASHINGTON, D. C. 20201

September 8, 1978

INTERNATIONAL LITERACY DAY

Even as we mark with pride recent progress toward universal literacy, International Literacy Day, 1978, is a time to acknowledge the need to quicken the pace.

Thirty years ago, nearly half the world's people could not read or write. Today, one person in five must confront life without these basic communication skills.

The ability to communicate becomes even more crucial as an ever-increasing population strives to meet the complex challenges of today and tomorrow. The world community can settle for no less than universal literacy in the years ahead.

On this International Literacy Day, I wish to confirm the commitment of the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare to pursue this goal.

Joseph A. Califano, Jr.

Appendix C

Sponsors, Planning Committee, Staff and Participants

Sponsors

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The Association of American Publishers

Planning Committee

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Action/Peace Corps
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Editor, *Proceedings of the International Literacy Day Conference*
Stuart Diamond

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